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A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct solution opened on October 4. Answers should be addressed to *TLS* Crossword, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. There was an exceptionally large response to Crossword No 34; the winner is F. R. Oliver, Mardon Hall, Streatham Drive, Exeter EX4 4QW.

Across

1 Meeting R.L.S., for example? (5)
4 Dylan's village, nothing to look back on! (9)
9 Senator for whom recoils wounding remark against love. (9)
10 One whose words repeat themselves and jar. (5)
11 Titaness making *very* ungrammatical statement. (6)
12 Fast girl who should perhaps have been faster. (8)
14 Deprivation, having not a panorama? (10)
16 Bard just short of pretentiousness. (4)
19 Chapter of insurance book. (4)
20 He was double-crossed by Zeus, thirty-eight times upstaged, Giraudoux suggests. (10)
22 Dirty work on board – villain discovered in S Wales port. (8)
23 Reprobate makes come-back familiar epitaph for Dickens character. (6)
26 "But of all the most reckless of life or of limb / Was ——— the Bul Bul Ameer". (5)
27 Smith's *troisième sexe*? (9)
28 Revenge was his, but "Was he devil or man?" (9)
29 Associated with cider – and wine, we hear. (5)

Down

1 Better clubbed on land than clobbered at sea. (9)
2 Rural poet short of wine. (5)
3 Philostrato's playful description of mirth. (8)
4 Auction's opening for Pierre. (4)
5 This clue's incorporating it, but 18 should! (10)
6 9's son-in-law describes himself as "not ——— jealous". (6)
7 *Forever Amber*? Not for Kate. (9)
8 Christian author's nameless tree down under. (5)
13 Him a cleric? Monstrous! (10)
15 Swift end was predicted for him, game to be shot. (9)
17 Though Addison could draw for far more, this was all he had ready. (9)
18 Lucius in a non-U racing boat. (8)
21 Russian physiologist married to a Russian dancer. (6)
22 Born to be suspended from hemp product. (5)
24 Uncle Wolfson? (5)
25 Disturb Eden to drive out Adam. (4)

Solution to Crossword No 34

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Towards respect for reality

Stephen Medcalf

IRIS MURDOCH
The Good Apprentice
522pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press. £9.95.
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From the mid-1950s, we were dazzled by a series of five novels by Iris Murdoch, each of which seemed both fresh and assured, and to develop in scope and wisdom from book to book: *Under the Net*, *The Flight from the Enchanter*, *The Sandcastle*, *The Bell*, *A Severed Head*. The very best, in quite opposed ways, one witty, dispersed and secular, the other meditative, intense and mystical, were perhaps *Under the Net* and *The Bell*: and with hindsight, one can see something different coming in *A Severed Head*. With striking quickness, it really did herald the 1960s: it was exciting in an uncomfortable way, the sexual mores it presumed were wild, it went in for fetishism in both the anthropologist's and the psychoanalyst's sense: and most disconcertingly of all, while the first four in the end subscribed to the ethic that Spirit and the end of man is love, the most authoritative character in this novel – I do not say the novel itself – declared this to be a culturally relative matter, mostly Christian and western, and that Spirit might be power.

In terms of Iris Murdoch's progress, it had a new kind of plot which J.I.M. Stewart caricatured in his *A Memorial Service* as a novel "full of searing and irregular passions" but titled *The Orrery* because "the characters . . . revolve round one another in an extremely complicated way, as if governed by clockwork". And in the novels which followed, this form, although not universal, recurred. In that first orrery novel, *A Severed Head*, the complicated dance of changing sexual partners seemed to serve three purposes. First, to express love as Miss Murdoch described it in her exciting book on Plato, *The Fire and the Sun*: "for many people the most extraordinary and most revealing experience of their lives, whereby the centre of significance is suddenly ripped out of the self, and the dreamy ego is shocked into awareness of an entirely separate reality"; secondly, to embody the unpredictability, the openness of human character as her husband John Bayley talked of it in his equally exciting *The Characters of Love*; thirdly and paradoxically, to develop the absurd self-deceptions and trivialities by which people fancy themselves in love. But while many of the subsequent novels seemed to intend all three purposes, the pattern, just because one recognized it, seemed only to work properly for the third purpose. Those novels were better in which the orrery was not dominant: and some of these – *The Unicorn*, *The Red and the Green*, *Bruno's Dream* – were very good indeed. Of course the intent of all the novels is what Murdoch describes, again in *The Fire and the Sun*, as "the subject of every good play and novel" – "the pilgrimage from appearance to reality". And the final value which actually works in them is love as Bledyard defines it in *The Sandcastle*, in terms of respect for reality.

You imagine that to live in a state of extremity is necessarily to discover the truth about yourself. What you discover then is violence and emptiness. And of this you make a virtue. But look rather upon the others – and make yourself nothing in your awareness of them.

Lately Iris Murdoch has written three in succession of another kind of novel – *The Sea, The Sea*, *Nuns and Soldiers* and *The Philosopher's Pupil*. They differ very simply from her earlier novels in that while those were mostly of about three hundred pages, these are of at least five hundred: and the greater length gives opportunity for a greater amplitude in the fictional world. The successor to these, *The Good Apprentice*, is one of her best: it may not reach the assuredness of those first five, but it compensates for that by just this amplitude.

It is primarily a symbol-novel: at least, it resembles some of the books of *The Faerie Queene* in having at its centre an immense and beautiful house in a wilderness, which seems as if it ought to be symbolic, inhabited by three odd, beautiful women, and perhaps hiding their father and husband, its designer and the designer of their lives. Like all Murdoch's symbols it is free-floating. In *The Sandcastle* there are hints – the use of the Tarot pack, the word

"coinherence" – that she had lately been reading Charles Williams, and the comparison is instructive. Williams's novel *The Greater Trumps* is entirely patterned on the Tarot pack, and all the Tarot symbols are seen explicitly in active life. In *The Sandcastle* a gypsy who haunts the principal characters is seen with the Tarots, to no obvious end, and a young girl tells a fortune dominated by the Falling Tower, which if it occurs to you, you can see accurately echoed in the place occupied in the plot by climbing the School Tower, and more vaguely in the book's title and its application to the love affair within. None of this does much more than add a tinge of mystery, of fear and fatalism: and in the pilgrimage from appearance to reality of this particular book, the fatalism and mystery probably belong nearer appearance, are part of a magical world which ought to be escaped from into free will and respect for reality.

Seegard, the house in *The Good Apprentice*, is both more boldly and more subtly handled. The eldest of its women, May, wife of its designer Jesse Baltram, invites his illegitimate son Edward there as a refuge from the guilt which has overwhelmed him because, having secretly administered a hallucinogenic drug to his best friend, he then, at the seduction of a girl, left him unattended. Unattended, his friend walked through a window and died. From the hell which follows, Seegard and Edward's quest for his father may help to save him: or again may offer only a magical and illusory, temporary respite. All the artificiality, silliness and disillusioning failure which might attend a deliberate acting out of a symbolic life in a specially designed house are brought into play. But Edward is left with some impression of its innocence and charm, of a symbol valid for a time, and if for a time then eternally. And a delight of the texture of the book is the progress of the year at Seegard from winter to summer, a healing which is not questioned.

Jesse Baltram is probably the kind of artist who is mostly enchanter, who works by exploiting humanity's desire to be given fantasies. But *The Good Apprentice* appeals to more authentic works of art, the sort that "with authority, show how we learn from pain" (*The Fire and the Sun*). The book must owe much to Titian's "Flaying of Marsyas", a painting which Murdoch described in a television programme about her personal revelations. Edward's uncle, Thomas McCaskerville, a psychiatrist,

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thinks of it as he begins to help Edward. "The entranced face of the tortured Marsyas, as Apollo kneels lovingly to tear his skin off, prefigures the death and resurrection of the soul." The painting stands for a notion of art which Edward thinks of at the end of the book in connection with Proust. "What a lot of pain there was all the way through. So how was it that the whole thing could vibrate with such a pure joy?"

In a way, this must be Iris Murdoch's aspiration: her book like Titian's painting is about the death and resurrection of the soul, is full of pain but enjoyable like Proust. But the word "pure" gives one pause. In contrast to Titian and Proust, there is in this book, as in all Miss Murdoch's work, a deliberately throwaway style, a piling up of wanton expression, as if she fears the temptations to magic which a perfect style would offer. One remembers people, happenings, scenes and thoughts from her books, but how often do the words themselves in their patterns lodge in the mind? The principal exceptions, and they are really exceptions that prove the rule deliberate, are speeches by committed Christians in specially evangelistic contexts – the sermons in *The Bell* and Bledyard's words already quoted.

To put it another way, Murdoch has always been interested in the idea of God not as an explanation of the actual world, but as a model for the creative artist. Asked once in an interview why she writes novels, she said "God, if he exists, is good because he creates beings who are not himself." But she prefers Plato's Demiurge to the God of Genesis, Job and John, because Plato stresses that the Demiurge had to create imperfectly out of "pre-existent material, which contains irrational elements, the 'wandering causes' which represent irreducible qualities tending toward some minimal non-rational order of their own" (*The Fire and the Sun*). Titian or Proust look as though they want this, which is necessary for the mortal artist, to be no more apparent than it has to be. Iris Murdoch looks as though she wants it to be apparent in language and in plot. Edward has to think near the end about the sequence of events as both "a whole complex thing, internally connected, like a dark globe" and as "a muddle starting off with an accident".

Now as well as the symbol, the book has also something of the orrery, the mechanical round of base sexual betrayal, embodied in a whole sub-plot concerned with Edward's step-father Harry, his aunt Midge and her husband Thomas McCaskerville. But perhaps only one of the characters, Harry, has the full dislikeableness of the normal persons of the orrery, a dislikeableness connected with their being influenced by no general scheme of values except the traditional early twentieth-century English upper-middle-class ones, which for them are weak or dying, so that the pleasure which they take in flouting them is depressing. In the slang of that scheme they are *awful* people: people who do what isn't done; people whose characteristic act from *Under the Net* on has been the violation of privacy – by reading private letters, eavesdropping on their children, invading bedrooms, or offering intrusive demands and advice; people who combine intellectuality with egotism in a way which in the Oxford of Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* would have drawn on them a well-deserved "O shut up, fish-face".

This orrery sub-plot is in turn connected with what all Murdoch's novels, at any rate the symbol-novels, have, an element of parable: not authoritative parable, but parable that is also experiment. *The Good Apprentice* begins with an explicit reference to Edward as the prodigal son, and his crime, return to his father, and redemption follow the parable exactly enough. But for Miss Murdoch a novel is a means of testing reality. It is not surprising that in her world, where authority is always suspect, the father of Christ's parable becomes fallible and an enchanter, and is only in Edward's awareness the means of his recovery. What is interesting is the treatment of the figure who is expressly said to be like the elder brother, already in Christ's handling of him double-edged. This is Edward's step-brother Stuart, for whom is also expressly claimed the title "Good Apprentice": at the time of Edward's sin, Stuart is announcing his intention to be apprenticed to good, to find out how to be perfect in a world where God does not exist. Murdoch appears to put him forward as at least pointed to perfection, but by her intention or intuition he fails in three ways.

First, part of his quest for perfection is celibacy: and it is clear why Murdoch associates celibacy and perfection. It is because she sees erotic emotion as a potential source of distraction, fantasy and self-deception. No doubt it is. But that she makes the point too simple becomes clear as she works out Stuart's consistency to the point that "the mechanical superficial aspects of the desires characteristic of his youthful age he dealt with himself, privately and without guilt, easily blanking out any tendency to erotic fantasy". That could have been all right but for the word "easily": Miss Murdoch has tried to make him too perfect, and run up against her own passionate concern with self-deception. For one cannot but suspect Stuart either of inhumanity or of self-deception in his easy blanking out, just as one does later when Edward jestingly remarks that perhaps Stuart has no unconscious mind.

Secondly, Stuart tries to mend matters in the orrery of Midge, Harry and Thomas, to no good effect. This may have been meant, as other actions of Stuart's to no good effect are clearly meant, to be like the disastrous interventions of Dostoevsky's Idiot, the inevitable failures of perfect virtue among imperfect people. But it is in marked contrast to what happens when Midge, who has been maddened by Stuart, approaches Edward. Edward, only beginning to emerge from his hell, indeed at the stage when he has added disillusion with the magical effect of Seegard to his bitter repentance, instinctively says the right things and unthinkingly has the right effect. As always with the elder and younger brother part of the prodigal son parable, one begins to think of the other parable of the perfect Pharisee and the man who will say no more than "O God be merciful to me a sinner": Stuart and Edward.

The third part of Stuart's failure concerns his refusal to use the word God of what mystically he experiences, trusts and moves towards. He says it is because the word is too mixed up with the personal God of orthodoxy. But what does this mean? Stuart's good, which is mixed up with mystical experience "like honeydew", would be regarded as altogether too personally conceived, too self-indulgently received, by many who have not disdained to use the word God, notably the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. That writer says that in the end one should think of God as one does of oneself, except that "He is thy being, and thou not His." One or two criticisms made of Stuart by the quite wise Thomas McCaskerville, who wonders if he has not the pride of the Stoic, might be thought to be groping towards saying that he suffers from the first sin of the perfect, the sin of Lucifer. He will surrender himself to the good and in that context he will even use the phrase "fall into the hands of God": but does his refusal of God as person suggest that he will not admit that he was *made*, is derivative? In contrast, Edward is, after all, the good apprentice, the man good at *learning*.

This may be a wrong shot: but it is at any rate a shot in the area of Murdoch's central concerns in this and all her novels and philosophical books – the relation between creativity, self-sufficiency, goodness, imagination, self-deception and reality. *The Good Apprentice* whets one's appetite for her promised book on Plato, where these problems may come nearer resolution. But that philosophical book will not, presumably, have the actuality, amplitude and enjoyment of this profound and delightful novel.

IN PAPERBACK

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(265)

Tumbled against the rocks

Craig Brown

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH
Mermaids on the Golf Course and Other Stories
233pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
£8.95.
0434335231

In her frank and somewhat bizarre handbook, *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, Patricia Highsmith condemned the usual obligatory conclusions of popular thrillers. "I find the public passion for justice [in fiction] quite boring and artificial" she wrote, "for neither life nor nature cares if justice is ever done or not." Her novels tend to eschew this artificiality with such vigour that it is a rare villain or psychopath whom the reader does not find himself willing towards freedom, a rare investigator or victim (sometimes the one becomes the other) whom the reader is unhappy to see dead. Those she terms her "murderer-heroes" or "hero-psychopaths" are usually people whose protective shells are not thick enough to deaden the pain as the world hammers at their emotions. They are victims of the intensity of their own passions, men whose feelings have unhappily failed to ossify at the accepted rate. Some live, some die, some kill, some crack up; they exist so close to life and to their own natures that the idea of justice for them or from them would be quite absurd.

Whether or not revenge constitutes justice, Highsmith and her heroes have a taste for it, her heroes exercising it in the novels, and Highsmith running races with it in her two books of thematically-linked short stories, *Little Tales of Misogyny* and *The Animal Lover's Book of Beastly Murder*. In these two books, Highsmith's *bêtes noires* – the cruel; the greedy, the tarty – all come to the kinds of sorry end that a particularly irritable and wrathful God might judge their due. But in *Mermaids on the Golf Course* authorial revenge is absent, because we are back among friends – the psychopathic, the lonely, the teeterers on the brink. "For writers and the fertile imaginations, suspense short story writing is a special way to broaden their field and increase income" wrote Highsmith in her unnervingly self-effacing way in her handbook. One can only hope that these short stories will increase her income; they have certainly broadened her field.

Her inimitable and so often imitated prose style remains the same, easing us into a cracked brain with remorseless facility, but her heroes are more varied in character and dilemma, and in one story she uses a kind of Gothic surrealism with chilling success. The story is "Not in This Life, Maybe in the Next", which Highsmith originally entitled "The Nature of the Thing" when it was published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1970. A good-natured widow, Eleanor, poor enough to take in darning, is visited by

> a squarish figure, about two feet high, an ugly little thing that at first suggested an upended sandbag. It took a moment before she recognised a large square head, thick feet in heavy shoes, incredibly short arms with big hands that dangled.

No one else can see the Thing and they all suggest that Eleanor is in need of a good rest; at the same time, the Thing shows himself to have a complete knowledge and understanding of Eleanor.

All this has been done often enough before, and will no doubt be done again; but Highsmith then goes further. After initial hostility, Eleanor warms to the Thing. He brings up the subjects of her husband, who has died, and her daughter, who has died, and her mother, who has died, all three of them people she has had to try to live without. He tells her he is not nice. She tells him that he is. The next morning she finds her cat strangled on the lawn. The Thing admits to it, explains that it is in his nature, and leaves forever. Eleanor is filled with the "unidentifiable hunger" of loneliness: "She longed for something, and did not know what it was." With customary neatness, she prepares her own suicide. As the blood drains from her wrists, Eleanor thinks of him, "small and strong, strange and yet so plain and simple. He had never told her his name. She realised that she loved him." There the story ends. Highsmith characters are often confronted with that which gnaws forgotten at the human heart, but not often as grotesquely and sadly as this.

The dream and the guilt of murder are pivotal to most of Highsmith's novels, but the act itself only occurs directly in one of these stories, "The Button". Highsmith's heroes are seldom fond of children (Ripley calls them "drunken dwarves") and the mongol child in "The Button" is despised by his father, who is revolted by his body with its "mouth that was merely a pink hole, ever open, with his oversize tongue usually protruding. The tongue had ugly ridges down it." Like other Highsmith heroes, the father has inherited none of society's means of abating his obsession. His physical revulsion and inferiority complex grow so wild that he contemplates murdering the child but instead, on impulse, murders a stranger in the street, preserving a button as a keepsake, squeezing it when he needs to. "He had killed a man in revenge for Bertie. He had superiority, in a sense, one-upmanship. He must never forget that. He could face the years ahead with that."

Characters in other stories, through weakness or lack of co-ordination, are denied access to such cleansing revenge and advance into breakdowns or retreat into art. People who gain control of their own lives – in no way Highsmith's "heroes" – do so at the expense of others. In "Where the Action Is" a young photographer, buoyed by the success of his photograph of a girl who has been raped, sees a future for himself in photographing

> poor families in Detroit and Boston, maybe some in Texas too; and fires, of course, in case he encountered tiny, rape and mugging victims the same; street urchins of wherever; sad-faced animals in zoos.

Most of Highsmith's characters can find no such opening. Her style, on the surface so smooth and calm, underneath so powerful and merciless, entices the reader in and then sends him, alongside the "psychopath-hero", tumbling against the rocks. She achieves this by allowing her strong, straightforward narrative voice to merge with the voice of the hero as he totters towards breakdown, so that what we had taken for truth becomes indivisible from madness. Against all this, justice would look a crime out of place.

In Hieroglyph and Shadow

Alan Hollinghurst

PETER ACKROYD
Hawksmoor
217pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0241 116643

Peter Ackroyd is much possessed by possession. In his first novel, *The Great Fire of London*, he aimed to trace the map of the Dickensian metropolis under its present form, and allowed one of his characters to be taken over by the spirit of Little Dorrit. In *Hawksmoor*, which includes the Great Fire of London in its narrative, he again shows the twentieth-century city malignly haunted by its fictional past – though this time it is not by a pre-existing fiction, but by one created in the novel itself. Ackroyd has reinvented early eighteenth-century London, and with it one of its greatest geniuses, Nicholas Hawksmoor. In his fictional form Hawksmoor becomes Nicholas Dyer: Nicholas Hawksmoor is the name of the present-day police officer who is possessed by his spirit.

Ackroyd himself, like some theatrical spirit-medium, has raised to an art the act of being possessed. He do the baroque architect – as he did Oscar Wilde in his previous novel – in different voices. *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* was consummate ventriloquism, so Wildean that it was easy to forget it was make-believe and the result of research, hard work and a brilliant ear. Alternate chapters of *Hawksmoor* are written as if by Dyer, and for these Ackroyd has forged a vigorous, eccentric pastiche style, of the late seventeenth as much as of the eighteenth century, which in its personal and irregular cadences is a finer achievement than his mimicry of Wilde's monotonous periods. It is a livelier and more literary style than Hawksmoor's own (although it does adopt and adapt a number of passages from his letters to his assistants and patrons); it is at once dramatic and confessional, and this gives these chapters something of the aural and claustrophobic quality of an epistolary novel. Such period voices, funny spelling and all, have a certain chic these days; none the less, Ackroyd has agglomerated a medium perfect for his purpose: the self-portrait of a fanatical and secretive schemer, alert, violent and solipsistic.

This is not quite the picture we have of Hawksmoor, but Ackroyd has taken his cue from the eccentricities of his buildings, which so disturbingly combine the barbaric grandeur of the antique with a kind of atavistic feeling for Gothic forms. His was a vocabulary that, more than any other in the brief epoch of the English baroque, seemed even in its own time a kind of Babylonish dialect in stone, and that was soon discredited by the fashionable correctness of Palladianism. Ackroyd's trick is to fix on this bizarrerie, and in turning Hawksmoor into Dyer to exaggerate it, subvert it and reinterpret it. In the process he aggravates Hawksmoor's differences from Wren, and from the empirical and scientific ethos of the Royal Society in general. The detail in which this is done is ingenious, with a kind of covert ingenuity like Dyer's own, and will be invisible to most readers. Few will recognize, for example, that Dyer's chance exclamation, "Curved lines are more beautiful than Straight", is an inversion of a dictum in one of Wren's *Tracts*, that "Strait Lines are more beautiful than curved".

Ackroyd acknowledges help in his subversive strategy from a strange book called *Lud Heat* by Iain Sinclair (1975), which, among other observations, plots the triangulation of the six churches which Hawksmoor designed as a Surveyor to the 1711 Commission for Building Fifty New Churches and infers from it some cabbalistic patterning. Ackroyd enlarges the figure to a mystical heptagon by giving Dyer a further, imaginary church: Little St Hugh in Black Step Lane, built on the site of a Druidic temple and, later, of the meeting-house of a satanistic society to which the orphan Dyer was admitted during the Plague. All Dyer's churches are built in "Hieroglyph and Shadow", cryptic symbolic expressions of occult beliefs, "Fearful Places, with Horrour in their Approaches".

There is something in this as a response to the emotional impact of Hawksmoor's churches and the dreamlike conundra of their compositions; and Dyer's insistence that they should be "Sollemn and Awefull" repeats the very words of Vanbrugh's proposal to the Commissioners that "a Temple . . . shou'd ever have the most Solemn & Awfull Appearance both without and within, that is possible". In the event, however, Hawksmoor's interiors were obliged to conform to the liturgical requirements of the Tory High Church, with their stress on light and clear visibility. Perhaps it is to avoid this that Ackroyd has brought the date of the Commission forward to 1708, two years before the Tories, whose triumph the fifty churches were to embody, came to power. From the start Dyer defines his discipline as *Scientia Umbrarum*, his medium being not light but darkness, his credo an acknowledgement of the folly and vice of the world and the supremacy of evil. An act of 1712 forbade burials near churches, and an early project of Hawksmoor's surrounds a church with an enclosure "to keep off filth Nastyness & Brutes"; Dyer's churches on the other hand are raised above plague-pits, reared on "a vast Mound of Death and Nastiness", and magnetize to themselves some of the filthiest and most brutal things one can think of. Most significantly, each site is consecrated to evil spirits by a human sacrifice made in its foundations.

The alternating chapters recount a series of inexplicable strangulations which occur in the environs of the six "real" Dyer churches, and the understandable failure of Detective Chief Superintendent Hawksmoor to find the murderer. The victims, like those of Dyer, are all "virgin boys" or else vagrants who have "become as a child". Parallels between the two periods, and between the words and experiences of Dyer and Hawksmoor, are plentifully established: the art of shadows has them both in its grip, and Dyer shadows and foreshadows Hawksmoor in a hundred details.

But all this is easily done. Dyer's pagan mysteries of the Renaissance have a compulsion, even an authority, in the idiom of their time, but as Ackroyd sets up facile parallelisms the trickery of the technique is somehow revealed, and the mechanics of possession appear trumpery after all. The eighteenth-century passages have the force of a revelation, even if a bogus one; the present-day chapters show it all to be a kind of hokum. It must be said, too, that when he is not in his possessed mode, Ackroyd does not write nearly so well. The cumbrous physical immediacy of the Dyer chapters is lost in the Hawksmoor ones, which try to generate mystery through portentous vagueness. Many of the echoes, such as children's street-games and songs (a rich treasury of superstition, of course), stick out clumsily in the modern passages, and the dialogue is obstinately implausible. As in *The Great Fire of London*, sketchy characters stagger as much from their symbolic burden as from their own hardships.

The end of the novel is hard to understand. In the penultimate chapter we leave Dyer in an exultant state in Little St Hugh, Black Step Lane. He may even be dying: his name has marked him as both an artist and a mortal, but his death would raise tricky, even tricksy, problems about the epistemological status of his text. The last chapter brings Hawksmoor in his (black) steps, and to a mystical confrontation with "his own Image". There is a visionary dance, or greeting of spirits, which might be a dream or might not. Hawksmoor becomes "a child again" – and so perhaps himself at last a sacrificial victim, entering the occult labyrinth of the church. There is an Eliotic mood to it – the church at smokefall, the dancers of *East Coker* – and Eliot, whom Ackroyd has most recently possessed, plays his part in the novel's concern with the City churches, its vision of purgatorial London, and its reflections on time. Dyer even has a servant called Eliot and there are a number of echoes from the poetry. What Ackroyd may be saying is that time present and time past are both present in time future, and that the essence of Dyer's possession of Hawksmoor is the simultaneity of experiences centuries apart, to which Dyer's churches are perversely capable of granting access – as all great art may be thought to transcend time. But *Hawksmoor* does not, alas, sustain that conviction; for all its sporadic brilliance and intricacy it has a lowering effect. It is a dark, cold novel, almost wholly untouched by altruism or responsibility.

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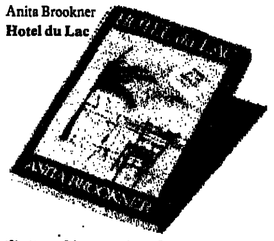

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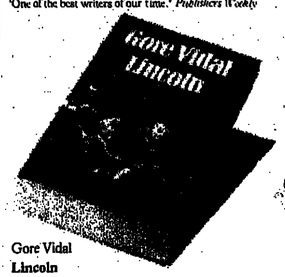

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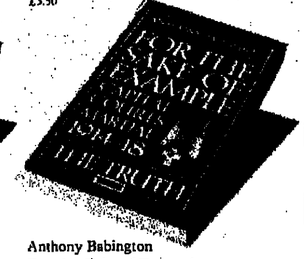

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Talking in the ranks

Laurie Taylor

TONY PARKER
Soldier, Soldier
244pp. Heinemann. £9.95.
0 434 577707

By now we have a pretty good idea of what to expect from a Tony Parker book. A small number of people will be found talking intimately about their lives and times: about how they make sense of their past and present, their jobs and homes and spouses. Parker himself will rarely appear in the pages but his presence will be readily discernible in the warmth he generates in his interviewees, and in the sense he conveys to readers that here is yet another group of relative outsiders – poor, criminal, deviant – who have previously been denied their full humanity.

In one important respect, then, *Soldier, Soldier* is a departure. For here Parker is taking on an institution which although certainly a victim of some stereotyping, is also an active propagandist on its own behalf, and more importantly perhaps, one with which Parker as a lifelong pacifist and Second World War conscientious objector could hardly be expected to have his usual sympathy. Indeed, it is mildly surprising that the Ministry of Defence allowed him such a free hand during his eighteen-month tape-recording tour of the barracks of East Anglia, Germany, Cyprus, Belize and Northern Ireland.

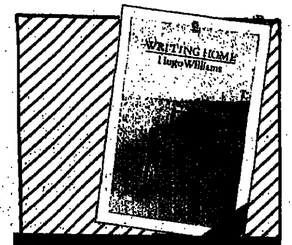
Perhaps they thought they were on safe ground. Inviting soldiers to reflect on their circumstances is something of a contradiction. "You're not paid to think, boy", remains a parade ground axiom. But Parker is clever enough to tease out the tentative insights and then let us see them being firmly bottled up again. A private reflects on his role in the officers' mess: "You could get bitter about it sometimes if you were that sort of person. They're single men and they don't have homes to go to for the weekend, while you're a married man and you have to give up your weekend with your family to act as servant for them. Still that's all part of the job, isn't it?" But what job? What exactly is the reason for waiting on officers at table? If, like Harry Roberts, you go on to ask that question, then you may already be temperamentally outside the army: "I remember one one day complaining to me that the water in the jug on the table wasn't cold enough, telling me to take it away and find a replacement. What's that supposed to do for you I don't know, except feel like spitting in it before you put it back on the table". (Harry left after twelve years' service and became a furniture dealer).

What distinguishes this occupational talk from that which you might find in civvy street is the obsession with hierarchy. Sometimes it comes out as a mere celebration of difference, a delight in being able to order others around (an officer describes to Parker the exquisite pleasure of being able to tell someone to go and run your bath for you). But here is also the satisfaction of being properly ordered: "Whenever an officer speaks to me I've found that he is always gentlemanly and polite. He will ask you to do something, he'll say, 'Lance Corporal will you do so and so or such and such' and the way he puts it to you, he makes you feel you are doing him a favour. I always reply, 'I'm your man, sir'".

But as Parker gets his subjects to show, hierarchy also looms large because the army remains one of the few organizations which still promote their lower orders strictly on merit, without reference to formal educational qualifications. "Leaving school at fifteen without so much as a single 'O' level or CSE to my name . . . well, if anyone had suggested that this is where I'd be when I was 40, obviously I'd have thought they were stark staring mad" (Tom Edwards, captain). When this secure open-ended career can also be contrasted with the bleak employment prospects outside; it's not surprising that even the humblest private can feel positively smug. "My brother said he'd never go in something where you got shouted at all day. Well, nobody shouts at him now: he's unemployed, he has been for a long time."

As long as one concentrates on the step-by-step hierarchy, on the path leading upwards to the highest ranks, then it's possible to ignore those flat acres of pointlessness which lie all around a soldier's career in peacetime. Somehow time has to be filled. People have to be kept on the move. There must be the illusion of action. "Half the time you're told to go somewhere or be somewhere or do something, but when you do nobody knows why the fuck you've been told to do it and what you're supposed to do anyway when you get there." (Kevin Bishop, private). Gradually, Parker chronicles the complex pains and pleasures of army life for each of the ranks: the fear and anxiety in Northern Ireland, the stinking futility of Belize, the friendly good times to be had in Germany. The worst job of all seems to be that of army wife: normally supervised by a Family Officer when their husbands are away, and then when the marriage breaks down, unceremoniously turfed out of their army house. ("In civvy street it couldn't happen that if your husband left you with 2 children to look after, then as well you'd find yourself with no place of your own to live" – Audrey Brown, private's wife).

One cannot help wondering how much of any soldier's reflectiveness about such issues as Northern Ireland or the Greenham women might disappear once he was in uniform, and standing alongside a couple of mates. The collective culture must be a great deal coarser than these private confessions suggest. But without any doubt this superb study makes nonsense of the notion that most soldiers are macho squaddies, dumb sergeants or straight-backed, chinless officers. What is more, Parker still has quite enough evidence to support his own pacifist reservations. For in restoring a degree of sensitivity and self-awareness to soldiers, he is simultaneously able to show the severe limits which army life places upon the full exercise of such qualities.



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Royal Ulster Constabulary patrol, photographed in Londonderry in the early 1970s by Terry Fincher; it is taken from Jorge Lewinski's The Camera at War: War photography from 1848 to the present day *(240pp. W. H. Allen. 0491 02485 1).*

Learning from the Falklands

Malcolm Deas

ALBERTO. R COLL and ANTHONY C. AREND (Editors)
The Falklands War: Lessons for strategy, diplomacy and international law
252pp. Allen and Unwin. Paperback, £7.95.
004327076X

The Falklands War is a collection of fifteen essays which emerged from a conference that took place in the autumn of 1982 – quite a long time ago in Falklands terms. The conference was attended by international lawyers and experts in international relations from American universities and the United States government; the book is therefore less than immediate and contains passages of wearisome obviousness and solemnity on such matters as the underemployment of the International Court of Justice. None the less it is worth publishing because it has the virtues of detachment and, with one exception, common sense. It should also be read since it provides the British reader with a range of United States opinion on the episode.

The essays are grouped in three sections, and the first is devoted to questions of international law. The historical-legal background is given in somewhat slipshod manner, but there are two useful essays on the role of law in the crisis itself – Thomas M. Franck's "The Strategic Role of Legal Principles" and Howard S. Levie's "The Falklands Crisis and the Laws of War". Franck concludes that

> principles evidently can rally both people and nations, even overcoming countervailing, more conventional perceptions of self-interest and alliance-politics. This rallying has strategic consequences. There is no doubt that Argentina's diplomatic isolation sapped its will to fight, as well as its ability to secure weapons, replacement parts and credits.

Levie finds that "the laws of war were more widely observed in the Falklands crisis than in any other conflict since World War II".

The second set of papers treats diplomacy, and contains lucid pieces by two diplomats, Douglas Kinney and David C. Gompert. Both emphasize the lack of any genuine military preparedness on the Argentine side. Kinney writes that "Argentina probably . . . hoped to discourage the United Kingdom militarily with the semblance of offensive preparations. . . . There was no major Argentine preparation to defend the recovered islands, no second half of the Malvinas plan . . . ", and Gompert, who was on the Haig mission, says that the Argentines "did not think there would be a war, as evidenced by the fact that they made no real preparations for one". The invasion of the islands was therefore neither symbolic nor "full-fledged". Both these authors point out that Argentina would have made tangible gains by accepting the United States proposals, and that the alternative was almost certain defeat: "Much of our time in the negotiations was spent trying to convince the Argentines that what did happen would happen." Inis L. Claude Jr contributes an account of United Nations efforts at settlement which besides providing a useful summary contains some pertinent insights:

> The heart of the matter was that the ethnic combination was wrong. Decolonisation justifies violence only when it is a matter of freeing non-Europeans from European rule, so as to satisfy their presumed demand either for independence or for union with their non-European neighbours. . . . This case was altogether too much an intra-European affair. The Argentines, an essentially European people, undertook to establish their rule over a British population that clearly preferred to remain under British rule. . . . This episode may confirm the notion that the Latin American states, or at least the ones exhibiting most conspicuously the evidence of their European origins, are acknowledged only as supporters, not as real members of the Third World – having a status analogous to that of white participants in the American civil rights movement.

The study of the Organization of American States that follows is less interesting and marred by errors: there was no Anglo-French blockade of the River Plate in 1806–7, the War of the Triple Alliance is not the Chaco War and there were no "Soviet tribunal members" available from the ranks of the lawyers of Imperial Russia.

The concluding contributions on the future are uneven. Monroe Cohen succumbs to the temptation to offer an ingenious interim solution in the form of a UN trusteeship under the joint administration of the United Kingdom and the United States; even one of the editors feels constrained in the epilogue to point out that this is open to immediate and insuperable objections. Christopher C. Joyner and David A. Colson are sensible about the Antarctic treaty and about boundary disputes in general, but Dav S. Zakheim's thoughts on "Strategic, Military and Technological Lessons" are disappointing: he makes no attempt to evaluate the conflict from an Argentine or Latin American point of view, or to discuss anything strategic about the islands. The conflict may well have been, as David C. Gompert puts it, "an aberrant blip on the radar scope of world affairs", and "future historians may find the significance of the conflict as mystifying as its origins", but the islands with their new airport make a larger blip than they did before the war, and an informed American opinion on the implications of that fact would have been welcome.

The beginning of the end

Charles Townshend

PAUL CANNING
British Policy Towards Ireland 1921–1941
344pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0198200684

The somewhat morbid fascination with the "end of empire", indulged recently in a television anti-epic (a form of anti-nostalgia suitable to the age of anti-heroes), finds its proper point of departure in the loss of British control over Ireland in 1921. Ireland was the first breach in the British Empire, and may well become the last. The loss of control involved not only the obvious political emancipation of the "nationalist south", the twenty-six counties which became the Irish Free State, but also the more disguised revelation that British authority over the "loyalist north" had been a figment of the imagination. The six-county area which became Northern Ireland followed its own interests rather than the priorities of British policy. The struggle to find a working accommodation with the disagreeable realities of 1921 has been a recurrent problem for British governments ever since.

Paul Canning's well-constructed narrative deals with the first twenty years of this uncomfortable adjustment. Though it is firmly grounded in primary source material, deftly used, its claim to attention is less one of originality than of useful synthesis, spanning phases already analysed in the work of D. W. Harkness, Deirdre MacMahon and Robert Fisk. Thus, the long-drawn-out crisis over de Valera's suspension of the land annuity payments, treated in exhaustive detail in MacMahon's recent *Republicans and Imperialists*, receives from Canning a sparer, but perhaps for most readers more approachable, presentation.

His perspective is high-political, and the coherence of the book derives from its concentration on Ireland as a problem in British politics. He talks of politicians who "mattered", and launches an interesting disquisition, which unfortunately remains inconclusive, on the importance of Warren Fisher, Head of the Civil Service throughout the interwar period. Fisher may well be, as Canning suggests, the most significant single figure of this period. But apart from the wonderment provoked by a quintessentially British Treasury chief who could happily remark "statistics are a sealed book to me", one is left puzzled about the precise nature of the power wielded by such Olympian functionaries. Canning talks at times of their "power"; at other points he retreats by declaring that they "had only influence, not power". By this he seems to mean that they could not launch political initiatives, which is largely true, but the qualification rather underplays the extent of their capacity to shape and constrain policy (an issue relevant today when "green" officials are once again suspected by Loyalists of preparing the betrayal of Ulster).

Such caution is presumably due to the fact that Fisher, sympathetic to Irish nationalism and bitterly hostile to the "blackmail and bluff (oddly enough called Loyalty)" of the northern Unionists, was unable to get his way until two progressive politicians, Neville Chamberlain and Malcolm MacDonald, took control of Anglo-Irish relations. Canning's Chamberlain is very much in the revisionist mould: in place of the flabby appeaser stands the tough-minded realist, impervious to Tory Diehard pressure while Chancellor of the Exchequer, and determined as Prime Minister to rationalize Britain's international stance and demonstrate his capacity to get done in six months what Baldwin had failed to do in six years.

As in Europe at large, Chamberlain's appeasement of Irish nationalism was not a craven surrender but a clear-headed search for a genuine power relationship. But in Ireland, as in Europe, the goal was illusory. Chamberlain's outlook was an age away from the feeble hopes of Lionel Curtis and others that the Irish Free State would become a bastion of the Empire-Commonwealth, headed by the "mother country" (rhetoric particularly disliked in Ireland, which, as Michael Collins pointed out during the Treaty negotiations, was not a mother country). But it could find no genuine accommodation with the irrationality of Fianna Fail nationalism. Nor could it remove the fatal obstacle to Anglo-Irish harmony, the resistance of the North.

Canning illustrates with great clarity the extent to which Britain failed to honour the spirit of the Treaty in relation to Northern Ireland (especially as regards the protection of minority rights). His detached tone makes his account particularly valuable in this sphere, though here too it is inconclusive in tackling the core problem. Given the will, did Britain have the capacity to coerce the Ulster Unionists? The British believed they did not. As Malcolm MacDonald put it, it was "not we who could persuade the North. Only the people of the Irish Free State could persuade them by pursuing a policy which would ultimately incline them to come in of their own free will." De Valera believed that Britain could play a decisive part in promoting Irish unity. Canning suggests that Britain did fail to make the most of the "leverage" it possessed in the shape of Treasury handouts, but the persuasive power of economic pressure in this case remains doubtful.

In the end, the return to power of Winston Churchill symbolized the political impossibility of any determined coercion of Ulster. The story of Churchill's evolution (if that is the right word) from Liberal Home Ruler to Diehard fanatic forms one of the most depressing threads in this book. Any chance of using the national extremity of 1940 to trump Ulster Loyalism by an appeal to wider patriotism, as Chamberlain tried to do, was undermined by Churchill's virulent reaction against Irish neutrality. In some respects, despite the successful negotiations of the late 1930s, Anglo-Irish relations were as hopeless in 1941 as they had been at any time since 1921; and worse was yet to come, in the shape of Churchill's victory speech and the 1949 Ireland Act, which guaranteed the integrity of the six-county state.

Seeking the United Kingdom

Edward Norman

JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON and GEORGE CHOWDHARAY-BEST
The Cross of Saint Patrick: The Catholic Unionist tradition in Ireland
487pp. Bourne End: Kensal Press. £14.95.
0946041261

There is a character in James Joyce's short story "Clay" who goes to work in a Dublin laundry run by Protestants. Her Catholic sensibilities are modified by the experience: "she used to have such a bad opinion of Protestants, but now she thought they were very nice people, a little quiet and serious, but still very nice people to work with". Irish history, and Irish literature, are full of such awakenings, and they operate in the reverse direction as well. There is a long tradition of Protestants finding in the grievances of their Catholic fellow-countrymen a ground of political consciousness. The relationship between Catholicism and nationalism in Ireland is subtle and complicated, and not always friendly; the contribution of Protestants to the nationalist interpretation of Ireland's difficulties is long and distinguished. Many of the leaders of Irish popular parties have been Protestants: Grattan, Wolfe Tone, Butt, Parnell and Douglas Hyde, for example.

Those who study Ireland's history are early made aware both of the Protestant part in nationalism, and of the Catholics who have dissented from some of the forms in which national politics have been represented. To categorize all those Catholics who have found themselves opposed to the politics of the national parties as "Unionists" is to stretch things a bit: most of them were, anyway, Irish nationalists according to some definition of their own, and most of them were, also, hostile to what they regarded as the extremism of their co-religionists over certain political issues, rather than positive enthusiasts for the constitutional relationship with England. It was always a small minority of Catholic Irishmen who simulated the very culture and accents of England.

The Cross of Saint Patrick by John Biggs-Davison and George Chowdharay-Best has one immediate problem. It is too long. It is understandable that this is so: the book clearly began as a modest affair, but the authors fell into the allure of Irish history that has overtaken so many before them, and the book grew in size. But for whom is it intended? Students of Irish history will already be acquainted with a great deal of what the authors say. To them, it will come as no surprise that Catholics were often found in opposition to nationalist politics. The general reader, on the other hand, will not want a book which, although it has considerable virtues, is such a lengthy read.

Despite that, the book is actually very good. It is an extended analysis of Irish history, from the Middle Ages to the present, based on a comprehensive reading of the secondary sources. It includes all the main political developments, but picks out, as little case-studies, the lives of particular Catholics who have supported what Sir John and Mr Chowdharay-Best call "Unionism". Though some readers (and doubtless some reviewers) may find fault, on points, with aspects of the historical judgments, the book is extremely successful at what it sets out to do – it conveniently gathers together what has already been known (but had not been systematically collated) about Catholic attitudes to political division. "The silence of Catholic Unionists has often given the false impression that they are few in number, mere exceptions to the general rule", the authors remind us: "Yet the evidence shows that Catholic Unionism was widespread and not confined to office-holders and toadies."

Indeed it was not. But there remains a real problem in defining who the Catholic "Unionists" were. Many of those discussed in these pages were not really "Unionists": they were Catholics who differed from other Catholics about the nature of the proposed management of public affairs in Ireland. Some went on, in the 1880s and subsequently, to oppose the Home Rule solution, and were, in consequence, swept up into general "Unionism". They were still widely separated, however, from the "Unionism" of the English or Ulster Conservatives. They differed a lot among themselves, especially about the degree of accommodation they should make with opponents. Some ("ambiguously", as the authors note) were known as "call-boys". They were the archetype of the Southern Unionists, opposed to compromise of principle. The politics of loyalism was always a complicated phenomenon.

It surfaces in this book over the supposed popularity of the British royal family in Ireland during the nineteenth century. The authors seem quite clear that Victoria, on her three visits to Ireland, elicited real and widespread enthusiasm from the Catholic masses. There must be some doubt if that was really the case. The press at the time certainly reported the cheers of the crowds and the proffered petitions of loyalty. But those events had about them the love of novelty which so easily excites a population bereft of entertainments and filled with curiosity; and they also showed the careful presentation of news coverage by the professionals at Dublin Castle. Compared with the popular enthusiasm in England for Garibaldi's visit in 1864, the appearances of Queen Victoria in Ireland produced an economy of acclaim.

Despite these problems of definition, this book does make a very useful contribution to Irish studies. Its research is accurate, and the themes are drawn with a careful balance and an eye for historical idiosyncrasies. The authors have a purpose, and this, too, is restrained and expressed with admirable courtesy to those who are likely to dissent from it. They advocate the firm maintenance of the Union in relation to Northern Ireland, and "the partnership of the two sovereign nations" as the style for a "Benelux" association of the Republic and the British part of these islands. In the genre of partisan historical writing, you cannot do better than that.

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From amorality to immorality

Arthur C. Danto

STEVEN LUKES
Marxism and Morality
163pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £12.50.
0198761015

Marx's approach to morality was deconstructionist *avant la lettre*. Historical Materialism teaches that morality is essentially ideology, a form of mere consciousness which epiphenomenally reflects, and through illusion reinforces, a society's class structures, themselves to be understood as functions of its system of production. One therefore is not to take moral claims at face value, but to seek instead the real class ends they serve. Our stance toward moral codes is accordingly to be strictly diagnostic: as with neurotic symptoms, which we do not suppose convey the information the neurotic supposes, we are to use them as indices to causal complexes their user misrepresents. A noncognitivist so far as the content of moral utterance is concerned, possessed of a theory which saw it as relevant only to understanding the causes that underlie the production of such utterances, Marx nevertheless moralized without restraint and behaved as though he lived in a universe stained with objective good and evil. It was as though he were blind to the consequence that his own moral judgments must be vacuous if his metamoral theory were true, and was locked in a pragmatic paradox of a sort endemic to deconstructionists as a species. Their theories must either dissolve themselves unless false, or they must allow themselves certain privileges of exemption which severely limit their truth.

"On the one hand", Steven Lukes writes near the beginning of his scrupulous, clarifying and important study, "morality is explained, invoked, and condemned as an anachronism; on the other it is believed in and appealed to and indeed urged upon others as relevant to political campaigns and struggles." The question then is how this disfiguring incoherence between moral attitude and attitude toward morality is to be reduced or dissolved – a problem rendered all the more acute through Marx's further claim that morality must disappear altogether from the classless society that revolution will in the end create. The internal tensions these problems generate within Marxist philosophy are not merely incoherences the Marxist has to live with if conscious of them at all: they have consequences we all have to live with in a world structured politically through Marxist power and practice.

"My suggestion is this", Lukes writes: "That the paradox in Marxism's attitude to morals is resolved when we see that it is the morality of *Recht* that it condemns as ideological and anachronistic, and the morality of emancipation that it adopts as its own." I cannot see this answers to the case, though Lukes's attributions are essentially sound. You could not get Nietzsche off the hook of self-stultification by saying that it is Christian morality he condemns while adopting the morality of the *Übermensch* as his own, if, like Marx, Nietzsche held a metamoral theory meant to disenfranchise morality as such. Historical Materialism, as Max Weber remarked, is not a tram we can get off at will. My own counter-suggestion is this. Marx would simply have disallowed a paradox. He would have perceived his own posture as descriptive rather than moralistic, granting that he flavoured what he would have claimed were essentially scientific descriptions, both of capitalist and classless societies, with a rhetorical invective he found irresistible. And he might then have said that though there indeed would be no morality in the new order of society, men and women would as a matter of fact behave in it in ways even we, within our moral framework, would regard as morally ideal.

Think of a main criterion of moral imperatives in Kant: we are to act only on principles we can coherently will as universal laws of nature. Well, if they *were* laws of nature, conformity to those laws would no longer be moral conformity, any more than conformity to the law of universal gravitation would be, as there would be no room for choice. So we are in effect morally willing a universe from which morality is logically absent. And something like this is true for Marx as well: members of the classless society would act in ways we but not they would recognize as moral, since acting that way is just the way they are. What we might describe as a morality of emancipation is simply the way things go in a society not destabilized by class. Morality, with us, may even be a form of alienation from our natures, just because it does prescribe: Kant goes to great pains to argue that there is certainty of moral value only when someone acts on principle and contrary to inclination. Marx was so optimistic in his moral psychology as to believe the new society will produce beings integrated in ways the very existence of morality excludes: their principles, if *per impossible* they had any, and their natures, would be one. And he felt the processes of industrialization were already forging a new kind of humanity in the proletariat itself. What we read as moralizing is then simply rhetoric, a moderate form of aggression the Historical Materialist may engage in as his contribution to class warfare. The language does not mean anything, but, as what we would call speech acts, it can inflict a certain hurt on those who believe it does.

Because it is aggression, in a kind of war, it benefits from the suspension of restraint licensed by the maxim *à la guerre comme à la guerre*. This brings us to the rather graver aggressions the paradox prefigures, and which constitute the chief and final concern of Lukes's book. I refer to the phenomenon of dirty hands that the committed communist is prepared to say are not dirty at all, since "dirty" has no place in his vocabulary, even if it has one in the vocabularies he impugns as a Materialist. It is one thing to taunt the bourgeois with epithets from his own moral armoury. It is another to crush, torture, dehumanize, terrorize, starve, gulagize, deracinate and oppress millions under the grinding weight of bureaucracies so at odds with a morality of emancipation as to add a further agony to those who perceive the discrepancy – and all this in the name of a society Marx believed immanent, inevitable and sweet. Revolutionists can and have insisted that ends justify means (taking it for granted that ends need no justification), but this cannot be *moral* justification since morality is not something Marxism can countenance. The Revolutionist may go on to say that if any of this violates moral principles, well, they are our moral principles, not his, as he cannot consistently have any (though he may have been infected by some he has to struggle against). And this goes considerably beyond paradox as a philosophical problem. We are in the space of suffering and despair.

"Marxism, from its beginning, exhibited a certain approach to moral questions that disabled it from offering moral resistance to measures taken in its name", Lukes says in the conclusion of his nevertheless sympathizing analysis. The question is where in Marxist theory this resistance could be found. The human paradise of the classless society offers a vision of freedom, self-fulfilment and integration, which may serve as a platform for criticizing other forms of social life whose moral language one rejects as empty and vicious. But where then are we to find principles of a moral nature for transforming the one, whose moral language is infected by whatever infects it, into the other, which has no moral conception at all? The problem is only deepened by an appeal to generic human rights which will be accused of belonging to the rejected morality of *Recht*. Call it what you will, something like morality is urgently needed for the space between the two forms of life, and it is precisely here that Marxism is systematically incapacitated from helping, having no room for transsocietal imperatives – not if morality is only ideology. It is not clear this form of the problem is really soluble in Marxist terms, though it may be soluble in human terms if Marxists could be brought to see it as a problem while holding to their ideals. The whole dark history of Marxist thought and practice must count against its becoming visible to them – and they may point out that it has made remarkably little difference in the political conduct of those to whom it is visible.

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Pragmatism and possibility

Quassim Cassam

ROBERT C. STALNAKER
Inquiry
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There are a number of reasons why philosophers are interested in the notion of a proposition. One is its intimate connection with the notions of truth and falsity: whether a proposition is true or false will depend upon how the world is, and this has resulted in some logicians characterizing propositions as rules or functions leading from the state of the world, or, more generally, from possible states of the world ("possible worlds") to truth-values. The notion of a proposition has also been invoked in accounts of the nature of certain mental states, with propositions appearing as the object (or contents) of so-called "propositional attitudes" – mental states ascribed by means of "that" clauses, as in "Tom believes that P, or hopes or fears that Q".

It has often been objected that the "possible worlds" account of propositions makes it impossible to characterize subtle differences in the contents of our thoughts which any adequate theory of mental states has to be able to give an account of. In his rich and complex investigations of the abstract structure of inquiry – the enterprise of forming, testing and revising beliefs – Robert C. Stalnaker's response to this objection is to defend the "possible worlds" conception by arguing that it is just the kind of theory we need given the (independently establishable) plausibility of a certain "pragmatic picture" of the nature of mental states like belief. This pragmatic picture sees the intentionality of such mental states as essentially independent of the intentionality of language, and prefers to explain them in terms of their role in the determination of action.

A consequence of the "possible worlds" analysis is that necessary propositions are identical. How, then, can someone believe that Hesperus is Hesperus, and yet apparently doubt or disbelieve that Hesperus is Phosphorus, given that both are necessary truths? Professor Stalnaker's metalinguistic proposal is that in this kind of case (though not in mathematical cases) the object of the inquirer's doubt is not the proposition P expressed by the sentence "Hesperus is Phosphorus", but rather the proposition that the sentence expresses P. The inquirer's ignorance is explained by his inability to exclude a possible situation in which, because one of the names refers to a different planet, the sentence expresses a proposition different from the one it actually expresses. This view might be suspected of not taking sufficient account of the distinction between that which *explains* the inquirer's doubt and the *object* of the doubt. Further, what are we to make of someone who correctly points out the planet which "Hesperus" stands for and the planet which "Phosphorus" stands for, and *still* dissents from "Hesperus is Phosphorus"?

In his discussion of the dynamics of belief, Stalnaker identifies the inquirer's dispositions to *change* his beliefs with his having certain *conditional* beliefs of the form "if P, then Q" which can legitimately be seen as forming part of the inquirer's conception of the way the world is. "Counterfactual" conditionals provide the best support for this view: X claims that if Wilson hadn't won, Thorpe would have; Y claims that Heath would have won. If the disagreement persists after the pooling of all information "we inevitably treat it as a disagreement about what the world is like". But the anti-realist might see the matter differently: the moral, he will insist, is precisely that the disagreement is *not* factual. There is surely no inevitability about Stalnaker's reading.

Stalnaker does not, indeed, claim that *every* counterfactual is determinately true or false. But how are determinate and indeterminate cases to be distinguished, given his opposition to "reductionism"? His response is that a counterfactual is determinate and irreducible if there is a non-trivial answer to the question "What makes it true?"

One might suppose that the answer to this question cannot itself be a statement in conditional form, and that the truth of the counterfactual must be "grounded" in certain facts statable by non-conditional sentences. But if it is conceded that a determinate counterfactual can be true only in virtue of the truth of some non-conditional statement, then is this not a form of reductionism after all? Stalnaker might reject the demand that the grounding facts be specifiable in non-conditional terms, but if the answer to the "What makes it true?" question is another conditional statement, one might be forgiven for regarding the resulting explanatory progress as somewhat limited.

Trusting the song, not the singer

Roger Nichols

PAUL GRIFFITHS
Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time
274pp. Faber. £17.50.
057113534X

"When the true artist is working", wrote Gide, "he always remains half unconscious of himself." If this is so, then Messiaen's writings about his own music may well appear more as a smoke-screen than as acts of exposition. As early as 1945 critics were complaining that he talked too much and Pierre Boulez, for one, still cannot understand Messiaen's apparently compulsive need to explain how his works are made. Paul Griffiths takes a properly critical view of Messiaen's words, identifying inconsistencies and contradictions, and insists on looking at the music first on its own terms and only then as the outcome of some intention, theological or otherwise. The results, on the purely musical front, are impressive. Not only is he alive to the processes in Messiaen's music (and as he rightly says in talking of the first movement of the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, "perhaps only the contemporary works of John Cage show so deep a penetration of mechanical process into musical intention"), but he has a flair for helping us to see the musical value of such processes and their links with the larger message of the work in which they occur. No one could fail to be stimulated by his discussions of "Le Loriot" from the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* or of *Oiseaux exotiques*: detail, meticulously observed, is harnessed towards the formulation of principle. My only real reservation in all his analyses is over his use of the word "heterophony"; might "idiophony" be a more accurate term for what he has in mind?

That said, there remain problems such as face any author tackling such a multi-faceted and inchoate subject. The organization of the chapters, chronological with small, justifiable changes, obviously favours the elucidation of detail in the work of a composer who admits to possessing "a very rich, well supplied ensemble of materials which is growing all the time". It does less service to the parallel thrust of Griffiths's enquiry which, as the title suggests, is aimed at Messiaen's notions of time and the extent to which his music is shaped by them. Indeed this whole aspect is treated in rather rudimentary fashion, despite many fascinating observations. Eastern music and Eastern ideas about time are not discussed in any detail, nor are we informed how their influence on Messiaen came about; Boulez, again, has said that Messiaen's interest in Indian rhythms and other aspects of Eastern music flourished amid sublime ignorance of what that music actually sounded like. This parallel thread, instead of being a warp to the woof of the critical discussion of individual works, is too often left hanging loosely and is not even gathered into a convincing knot at the end of the book. One feels perhaps there are two books here which should have been kept separate. Certainly the title as it stands is rather misleading.

Griffiths is particularly acute on the question of music and its relationship with theology. He puts his finger squarely on the problem as it concerns Messiaen, when he says his work is "too theological to be purely musical, too musical to be theological". His discussion of whether the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* is a religious work is an example of his critical but balanced writing at its best and he is surely right to say that in the matter of Messiaen's birdsong notations "the accuracy of the copy seems rather beside the point" since Messiaen, in his more recent works at least, makes two versions, one from life and one from a tape recording, and then mixes the "artistic" with the "more exact". As for the problems Messiaen's religious works come up against in a largely secular world, Griffiths is perhaps more accommodating than the composer, who says bluntly that it is easier to appreciate his music if you are a believer. Here Gide's dictum may again prove true, and in the years to come Griffiths's faith in the music's ability to look after itself may indeed be justified.

What is less easy to justify, however, is his unwillingness to check historical facts and suppositions with the composer himself. Half a dozen times a "could well have been" and an "it's not clear that" suggest that Messiaen either is no longer with us or is reluctant to help biographers with their enquiries. The difficulty is rather to catch him when he is not in some distant part of the globe. As it is, he was kind enough to confirm, in the briefest of conversations between aeroplanes, that he did in fact know the prepared-piano music of John Cage as early as 1946 (see page 137). We might also have been offered some brief description of the two devotional books mentioned on page 118, from which Messiaen took ideas for the *Vingt Regards*. As to the year when Messiaen first got to know Emmanuel's *Trente Chansons bourguignonnes* (page 27), he says in his preface to the 1981 reprint of Emmanuel's *L'Histoire de la langue musicale* that it was around 1928–9 when he was in Emmanuel's history class at the Conservatoire.

If Paul Griffiths's book, unlike Messiaen's best music, is not more than the sum of its parts, that may be because it is harder in words than in music to be what he calls "an artist . . . working on two levels of intention". The parts none the less are mostly excellent, and his sensibly critical stance, together with his deep knowledge and understanding of the music, make this a book to which the interested reader will return again and again.

Musicoloquious

Arthur Jacobs

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY (Editor)
Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians
Seventh edition
2,577pp. Oxford University Press. £95.
019311335X

If in British musical circles the name of Baker is not as familiar as that of Grove, the reason may be that this compendious single-volume work of musical reference has not until now had a major British publisher. Dr Theodore Baker's publication first saw light in New York in 1900. In 1949 its fourth edition acquired a supplement by Nicolas Slonimsky, who since then has been in charge of each subsequent edition.

Two things have distinguished Slonimsky's apparently inexhaustible labours (he is now ninety-one), both on this dictionary and on his day-by-day chronology, *Music Since 1900*. He is a relentless pursuer of exact dates and correct names: his letters to civic registrars all over the world have elicited information exposing the ignorance or the deliberate deception of the subjects themselves. Stokowski's claim to have been born in Cracow in 1887 collapsed when Slonimsky displayed the London birth certificate of 1882. In this new edition a "newly found birth certificate" robs Prokofiev of four days of life: his birth-date according to the Gregorian calendar was apparently April 27 (not 23), 1891, notwithstanding Grove, the Soviet biography by Nestyev, and other supposedly reliable sources.

With matter-of-fact passion for accuracy has gone an extravagance of English vocabulary rivalling that of his fellow Russian émigré, Vladimir Nabokov. Gleefully rescuing *quaquaversal* from the geologists, he uses it several times along with such compounds as *claustrophiliac, sciolistic, paraleptically, horriplating, Schubertiomorphic* and *Mozarticide. Pandiatonicism*, an earlier coinage of Slonimsky's, has now become quite accepted in the analytical vocabulary of twentieth-century music. His entry on himself, not altogether mocking, narrates his being eased out of a Californian university post on the grounds of "irreversible obsolescence and recessive infantiloquy".

One can admire the vigour of the enterprise and even relish the style while finding this seventh edition in many ways deficient as a revision of the sixth (1978). There is much new information and some valuable expansion of work-lists: Schubert's compositions have now acquired their Deutsch catalogue numbers and the hundreds of his songs are individually listed. But elsewhere the addition of new material sometimes upsets the old: Bach's Brandenburg concertos are now surprisingly stated to be all in three movements; Monteverdi is credited with two extant operas" though three are separately and correctly listed.

Not a general music dictionary but listing people only, *Baker* has room not only for composers and executants but for critics, scholars, librettists, even managers (Rudolf Bing and Sir David Webster, but strangely not George Quinlan of Glyndebourne). Not only jazz musicians but rock musicians too are featured, at what may be thought excessive length. Groups do not gain entry under their own names: no "Beatles", no "Amadeus Quartet". But the individual Beatles all achieve entries (the general history of the group being for some reason under "Lennon" only), and likewise the members of the Beaux Arts Trio. Yet none of the Amadeus members appears – one of several oddities and gaps in the representation of British music. The impermissible form "Britten, Lord Benjamin" appears as the entry-title for that composer, and the omission of *The First of the Few* from the list of Walton's film music means that the orchestral concert piece called *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue* cannot be properly cross-referenced. Of two Victorian composers, Frederic Clay still bears (as in the sixth edition) inappropriate French accents on his forename and the reference to Macfarren's blindness, surely a significant biographical detail, has been removed without explanation.

Reference to the Soviet pianist Postnikova properly discloses that she is the wife of the conductor Rozhdestvensky, but the entry for Rozhdestvensky does not make the connection; nor does it divulge that he is the son of another conductor (Anosov, not listed) but took his mother's surname. From the abundance of material in *Music Since 1900* on the Soviet musical scene, Slonimsky could have thrown much more illumination on the political vicissitudes of Soviet composition than he chooses to do here. No hint of the shameful ideological attack launched under the political direction of Zhdanov in 1948 can be gathered from the articles on its most distinguished targets, Prokofiev and Shostakovich; the article on Khrennikov, while mentioning his appointment as secretary-general of the Union of Soviet Composers, makes no allusion to his leading position in prosecuting that attack. Elsewhere, there is a strange remark that the distinguished Soviet violinist Leonid Kogan "resolutely declined to participate in any protests, domestic or foreign, against the presumed anti-semitism in Russian politics, even though he himself was patently Jewish". Why level this criticism at Kogan but not at David or Igor Oistrakh, or Emil Gilels?

For readers whose basic musical reference is a very large source (*Grove*) or a medium-sized one (Michael Kennedy's admirable recent *Oxford Dictionary of Music*), the new *Baker* will be a useful back-up, with entries for a substantial number of people not in the other works: the pity is that no more can be claimed for it. The present volume under the Oxford imprint constitutes a bibliographical curiosity which will alarm librarians: though not proclaiming itself as such, it is in fact a revised second impression. The first impression, as seen in New York, puzzled by listing the minor Danish singer called Peter Cornelius while omitting the more important German composer of that name. (The 1978 edition logically had both.) Now in a somewhat desperate rescue the singer has been excluded and so have a couple more entrants in order to restore the composer Cornelius: but there is still not quite enough room for him and the list of articles referring to him has been barbarously docked at the tail.

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Domestic echoes

Roy Fuller

HUGO WILLIAMS
Writing Home
70pp. Oxford University Press. £3.95.
0 19 211970

Hugo Williams, now forty-three, seems to me to be a poet who has got better and better, though by no means starting from an inferior mark. But nothing so far has quite prepared us for the authority of *Writing Home* (a Poetry Book Society Choice). His last book of verse, *Love-Life* (1979), was a private press book, restricted to a sequence of twenty-six love poems. His last general collection, *Some Sweet Day*, previously his best, is now ten years old. The new volume is once again a sequence with a unity, but this time of substantial length. In a marvellously subtle way it brings back the poet's childhood and adolescence, and, above all, his dead father.

Many will recall Hugh Williams (1904–69) as a stage and film actor of great good looks and style. He served in the Army during the war and possibly never really recovered the fame and prosperity of his pre-war years. Indeed, it appears from his son's poems that at one time he went bankrupt, and also had actively to seek engagements. The portrait of him that emerges from this book is fascinating: a man of *savoir-faire*, elegance, cynicism, affection, utter professionalism, and perhaps final sadness. I quote the end of a splendid poem about the adolescent Hugo trying to live up to his father's wish for him to be properly turned-out:

"You should be with someone a full minute
before you realize they're well-dressed,"
said my father. I imagined it dawning on people
in sixty seconds flat
that I was his equal at last.
"Suppose you realise before that?" I asked,
wriggling my toes in my chisel-toed chukka boots.
"Probably queer," said my father.

Hugo Williams has avoided all the pitfalls in writing of a father–son relationship, and also in the revelation of his own past. There is great feeling in these poems, but it is most adroitly varied and depicted. There is fun, too, but it is miles above the usual clichés of family life and schooldays remembered. The master in charge of "letter-writing" goes into the classroom corner in exasperation:

While his back is turned
I roll a marble along the groove in the top of my desk
till it drops through the inkwell
onto the track I've made for it inside. I can hear it
travelling round the system of books
and rulers: a tip-balance, then a spiral,
then a thirty year gap as it falls through
the dust-hole into my waiting hand.

The last lines are an example of the modulations in time in many of the poems, which make them less simple and straightforward than my quotations have possibly implied. Several are more extended as well as more complex pieces than Hugo Williams has previously written: for instance, there is a six-page poem cunningly constructed out of the actor's letters home from wartime North Africa; and the fine "Death of an Actor" is almost as long. The latter well illustrates the slight formalities Williams uses to give his work shape and discipline – a mere repetition of the word "Now", extremely effective.

Throughout there are such devices as internal rhymes and assonances, equal-lined stanzas, even a double "sonnet" – reassuring in the consistent free verse. Williams wrote a while ago (*Poetry Book Society Bulletin*, Summer 1970) that he greatly admired "the technique of certain English light comedy actors who can weigh lines on a scales inside their heads which tells them the exact tone of voice with which to drop them cold, or otherwise. It's the aureole, the echo, the haze of a line which counts, not its specific gravity." Those words are very much apropos the present collection, the most entertaining and haunting I have read for a long time.

The first, second and third prize-winning poems in the *TLS*/Cheltenham Literature Festival Poetry Competition, along with the three runners-up, will be printed in next week's issue. The prize-giving ceremony will take place on October 6 at 12.30 in Cheltenham Town Hall (admission £3, including buffet), when the editor and poetry editor of the *TLS* will be joined by the other judges, Douglas Dunn, Isabel Colegate and Patricia Beer, to talk about the entries, and the winners will be invited to read their poems. Other events in the festival scheduled for the same day include a lecture by Michael Foot on Byron in Venice, a reading by Alan Howard and Christopher Logue of the latter's translations from Homer, *War Music*, and a performance of *Anton Chekhov*, devised by Michael Pennington.

Devoutly lyrical

Mary Lago

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
Selected Poems
Translated by William Radice
202pp. Penguin. £2.95.
0 14 007985 8

In November 1913 the musicologist Arthur Henry Fox Strangways tried to bow out as Rabindranath Tagore's *ad hoc* and unpaid literary agent in London. It was, Fox Strangways wrote, "not the sort of business for which I really exist: my job is music. I think therefore I must ask you to find someone else, and pay him . . . . The fact of getting the Nobel Prize makes a great difference to your position. . .". The extra duties had fallen to him as Secretary of the India Society, after William Rothenstein, prime mover of Tagore's career in the West, recommended that its members' publication for 1912 be Tagore's free-verse translations of selections from his Bengali lyrics. *Gitanjali (Song-Offerings)* was a smash. Rothenstein arranged for Macmillan's trade edition that brought Tagore the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, the first such award to an Asian. Tagore was slow to take Fox Strangways's point and suggested that Ernest Rhys assume the burden. No, Fox Strangways replied: Rhys too must earn his living. Thus, on Fox Strangways's recommendation, Tagore's business affairs were entrusted, at an agent's 10 per cent, to the Macmillans. They discharged that trust scrupulously, as their archives (in the British Library and New York Public Library) confirm.

Macmillan left literary judgments to Tagore. His English was very good indeed, but he felt nervously uncertain about it. Help was at hand in Edward J. Thompson, an untypical Wesleyan Methodist missionary teacher who knew and loved the Bengali language and its literature. Tagore set him to work translating but a year later coolly substituted Charles Freer Andrews, who admitted that he knew no Bengali. Soon he was handling Tagore's literary business and advising on choices for translation.

Andrews, who had joined the Cambridge Brotherhood in Delhi, embraced the stereotype of Tagore as Wise Man from the East. Leonard Elmhirst, who knew Tagore well, once witnessed Andrews's panicky veto of Tagore's request that Rothenstein take him to a London music hall: the public must not see the Poet in so frivolous a setting. Although Rothenstein found him the jolliest of companions, if extracted from among his disciples, the solemnity of Tagore as Prophet endures most persistently in the West, along with impressions of rather limp romantic poems; later poems are virtually unknown.

The longer a reputation is set in stereotype, the more difficult is restoration of the original. William Radice's devoted and personal selection of work from 1881, when Tagore was twenty-one, to 1941, the year of his death, samples a lifetime of poetic experimentation. Unfortunately, this is not yet the work to attract the deserved new audience. Restorers must remember that Western ignorance about Tagore's literary and cultural contexts was a principal reason for the decline of his popularity in the 1920s. Readers, now more generally knowledgeable about India, need specific explanations, but a number of those are buried in a concluding seventy-five pages of discursive notes, which readers are unlikely to explore if they find the poems initially unrewarding.

Tagore was fundamentally a romantic, the lyric his natural voice. Radice refers only obliquely to the model – the countless devotional lyrics of the Vaishnava *bhakti* movement – without explaining Vaishnavism's pervasive influence on Bengali life and literature, from the Middle Ages to the present. Are Tagore's lyrics love poems? Religious poems? Most Western readers in 1913 could not decide. They are both, derived from the enormously extended Vaishnava metaphor – the love of Radha and Krishna – for the relation between God and the soul.

The modern Tagore commenced long before the Bengali *vers libre* of his last years. In 1900 *kshanikā* (Ephemera) was, as Radice states, "a revolution in Bengali poetry" – the first use of everyday material and colloquial rather than literary diction and verb forms for serious poems. Radice includes only one item from that innovative collection. Omitting some of the anecdotal poems from other collections, and editorial compression of the notes, would have admitted additional examples, with introductory explanation of reasons for the rigidity of contemporary criticism and of Tagore's reasons for defying it.

The translator has wisely not tried to duplicate Tagore's Bengali rhymes and meters and in general conveys the flavour of his poetic idiom despite some infelicities of English phrase and omission of Bengali details. For example, the lamp in "Gift" is *shandhya-dip*, the evening lamp, rendered as merely "light". Such details were important to Tagore. Also important, as Radice notes, were the arrangements of lines and stanzas on the page, but he does not always preserve them. Comparison of texts with the multi-volume *rabindra-rachanabali* (Rabindranath's Works) is somewhat inconvenienced, for the translator has used a selected edition, which apparently attributes at least four poems to the wrong Bengali collections.

Readers who retain an impression of otherworldly poems replete with flutes, rain-clouds, and separated lovers will, except in the late poems, find only that and remain unconvinced by testimony to the power and magic of the Bengali poems. Nevertheless, those poems are one aspect of Indian culture and of Tagore's genius and humanity. They complement another aspect, the humanist social critic and patriot who speaks through his best fiction, which Satyajit Ray translates into film with such artistry and fidelity.

Mid-March

I hung the saw by its haft from the saw-horse end
Pointing away from me into the wind
So that the blade should injure no one: the current
Running against the saw-teeth headlong, sent
A thin cry up, half-way to music, a high
Metallic song and severing of air from air,
A prelude to the night's frost, as it were.
The in-between season vibrated from those notes.
For weeks of immoveable snow only a gong could float
The appropriate brooding major across the land
To summon the storms in. This wiry band
Of reverberations vanished skywards, or perhaps
The March moon's crescent of peel is a snapped-
Off fragment of one of them solidified
On the freezing blue of a darkened sky.

CHARLES TOMLINSON

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Between the thistle and the moonlight

David Norbrook

HUGH MACDIARMID
The Complete Poems
Edited by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken
Two volumes, 1,494pp. Penguin. £8.95 each.
0 14 007913 0 and 0 14 007914 9

"It is wi' poetry as it is wi' herrin' fishin' . . . . There's never a guid market for owre guid a haul". Hugh MacDiarmid learned this from experience. He was an enormously inventive and productive poet, pioneering the revival of poetry in Scots and helping to stimulate a Gaelic revival, initiating the communist poetry of the 1930s, and moving on to attempt to bridge the widening gulf between science and literary culture. But his poetry has until recently received very little critical attention, primarily, perhaps, because MacDiarmid obstinately refused to live up to the conventional requirements for a modern British poet: to be modest, ironic and gently conservative. He described his poetic project as "Spenserian", and his work does have a Renaissance quality in its aspirations towards political prophecy and encyclopedic comprehensiveness. These ambitions did not find a good market: his published collections, especially from the 1930s onward, appeared only in limited editions from small presses, and many important poems remained buried in obscure periodicals. The so-called *Collected Poems* issued by Macmillan and by Oliver and Boyd in 1962 was no more than a large selection. It was therefore impossible to understand his poetic career properly until the authoritative *Complete Poems*, edited by W. R. Aitken, the leading bibliographer of MacDiarmid's works, and Michael Grieve, the poet's son, appeared from Martin Brian and O'Keeffe Ltd in 1978, mainly due to the personal interest of Timothy O'Keeffe. MacDiarmid died before the publication date; but the *Complete Poems* did help to initiate the critical breakthrough he had so long been waiting for. Books by Alan Bold, Ann Edwards Boutelle, Nancy Gish, Catherine Kerrigan and Harvey Oxenhorn have begun to make possible a fuller understanding of his poetry based on a survey of the whole canon. The Penguin edition is a reprint of the 1978 collection with the addition of a few poems subsequently unearthed by J.K. Annand, Alan Bold and W. N. Herbert. As the editors observe, more material will probably come to light; the new edition does not print the alternative ending to *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* which appeared in Alan Bold's edition of the *Letters*. But all of the major poetry is collected here, and this is the edition the poet himself wanted; "I could not have been better served", he declared.

But if it is faithful to the poet's wishes, it is still a certain way short of the ideal collection. MacDiarmid insisted that annotation and glossing should be kept to a minimum; and yet his reputation has suffered, and his poetry has been misunderstood, because of a lack of proper commentary, and it is a pity that this edition offers its readers so few guidelines. We are given hardly any biographical information and the minimum of bibliographical help, and the ordering of the edition makes it extremely difficult to grasp the poet's development. The poems are printed in the order of their first appearance in book form, with a lengthy appendix of previously uncollected poems. Since MacDiarmid found it increasingly difficult from the 1930s onward to appear in print, this arrangement merely reduplicates the random fluctuations of publishing history.

Admittedly, the editors were faced with a very difficult task; the 1978 *Complete Poems* marked a massive advance on any previous collection, and it will be some time before enough research has been done to establish a more precise chronology. But some new information has come to light since 1978 and it is a pity that the Penguin edition does not at least contain a bibliography. Moreover, the glossary of Scots terms, inconveniently placed at the end of Volume Two, is inadequate; and it is not only MacDiarmid's Scots that creates difficulties. Grieve and Aitken follow the convention that readers who have difficulty with "abune" or "baur" will take "cyathiform" or "diallage" in their stride; but the fact that MacDiarmid's English is as "synthetic" as his Scots is central to his poetics. Much of his work, from the early lyrics to the so-called "poetry of fact", is a mosaic of juxtaposed quotations, and this method can only be understood with a certain amount of editorial help.

The most astounding piece of editorial non-intervention in the 1978 *Complete Poems* was the inclusion without any comment of the lyric "Perfect". This had become perhaps the only poem of MacDiarmid's to receive widespread critical discussion in England, when Glyn Jones pointed out in the *TLS* in 1965 that seven of its eight lines had been taken from one of his short stories. MacDiarmid declared that the poem would "of course" never appear again over his name; but the 1978 edition makes no mention of Jones. The Penguin edition adds a note declaring blandly that this had been a "misunderstanding". It may rather have reflected the poet's own characteristic combination of aggression and defensiveness, a delight in pulling a fast one over his readers combined with an insecurity about his achievement. In fact, as Kenneth Buthlay has shown, he did not need to apologize for "Perfect"; the slight additions he made did produce a new poem. In some ways it is ironic that "Perfect" should have become so well known, since its form and title seem to point to a poetics of imagistic perfection which MacDiarmid devoted his life to contesting. In another sense its mode of composition is highly characteristic: a combination of individual craft with a more impersonal "luck", the discovery of a text in the public domain and its adaptation to a new purpose. We know that in 1938, shortly before "Perfect" was published, he had read with great interest a letter (ironically, in the *TLS*) by Alan Hodge asking for information about "synthetic poetry" by communist writers which illustrated the theory that poetry is common property.

This theory perhaps seems less arcane now than it did in the 1960s, when the *TLS* correspondence closed with a complaint that MacDiarmid had acted like a chap who took to wearing another chap's tie. If his poetry is often a collage of quotations, they can be striking in themselves and gain extra force from their juxtaposition. This is not to say that the tactic is always successful; and there are practical problems about the theory of poetry as common property when it comes to living writers – dismissive of other writers' claims to copyright, MacDiarmid fiercely defended his own. But the critical issues are more complex than simply whether or not the poetry is directly original; in order to assess the problem we need to know a lot more about his sources. Some progress has been made since 1978, but often he made his commentators' work doubly difficult by covering his tracks – for instance, "A Change of Weather" (p 1159, also in "The Borders", p 1426) opens with a fine passage from Hazlitt's "My First Acquaintance with Poets" which has been translated into Scots. Often, too, he clearly expected his readers to recognize quotations he did not attribute: I do not think it is MacDiarmid's fault that some lines from Edward Thomas are printed in this edition as his own (p 665). He also frequently cannibalized his own poetry, and many original passages appear more than once in the *Complete Poems*.

Had MacDiarmid known the word "intertextuality" he would certainly have used it; his ideas on poetry, though never formulated into a consistent theory, in some ways anticipated the themes of post-structuralism. *In Memoriam James Joyce*, with its praise of Saussure and its insistence on the centrality of linguistics to the study of culture, was originally scheduled to be published in Paris in 1939. As usual his luck was bad: if Roland Barthes had taken him up, MacDiarmid would now be quoted by every English intellectual. His poetry undertakes a continual critique of conventional notions of poetic composition which is closely linked with a critique of traditional political forms. In each case he insists on seeing processes that are conventionally described as natural as being in fact artificial or synthetic. Poetry is not a stable, sacramental fusion between sign and meaning, the individual and the collective: in the moment of the affirmation of personality, there is a sudden awareness of larger, non-subjective linguistic forms which come as a shock.

His insistence on the artificiality of symbols certainly extended to his conception of his own nation. The cover picture of the Penguin edition is a full display of the conventional semiotics of Scottishness: the poet in Highland dress, clutching a staff, and posing against a background of hills and lochs. But the poetry is constantly concerned to situate "Scottishness" historically and politically; he insists that it is a construct, not a natural reality, and one that is formed with a conscious polemical intent. After all, he had been born (as Christopher Murray Grieve) in a small town only a few miles from the English border; a slight accident in boundary-drawing and he would have been a northern English poet. In a previously uncollected poem he describes with some relish a nightmare in which he loses his way in the Borders and is unable to tell whether he is in England or Scotland. If this leaks out, what will the press say?

Poet's intuition baffled by peats.
Nationalism whummled on Border moor.
Countries indistinguishable in Dark.
Daily Record's Competition – Midnight Tour.

Scottish Party trains reid herrin' as guides.
Novelist suggest a phosphorescent line.
Where is it? Pictures. Prizes for Replies.
MacDiarmid denies he'd owre muckle wine.

Nations, like words, are formed by arbitrary dividing-lines; and Scotland's own identity as a nation was certainly not a natural linguistic one. The traditional split between Scots-speaking Lowlands and Gaelic-speaking Highlands had been accentuated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the split between an increasingly Anglicized courtly and religious language and the popular Lowlands idiom. Scottish writers aiming at a wider public had had to turn in the Renaissance period to Latin and in the Enlightenment to English – Hume nervously pruned Scotticisms from his writings. For Edwin Muir, writing in *Scott and Scotland*, this lack of "organic unity" was the Scots quivalent of Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility", a fall from a natural unity between symbol and meaning, between the individual and traditional social forms. For MacDiarmid, however, "organic unity" of this kind was not something to be regretted: writers like Buchanan and the Enlightenment philosophers gained a radical cutting edge to their thought from their awareness of language as synthetic. He entirely lacked the nostalgia of Eliot, Yeats or Lawrence for epochs before emotional unity had been disrupted by excessive rationalism; for him, human beings were most human when they thought most intensely. He therefore had no objections to a scientific rather than mystical conception of language (though he did tend to erode this distinction in practice). Linguistics, he could claim, was his middle name: he identified himself with a line of linguists from the Borders named Murray, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* was often named "Murray" after its editor. These linguists had combined their scientific inquiries with liberal political views; MacDiarmid speaks of "that passion for linguistics which is so distinctively Scottish (and so republican *au fond*)". Muir had declared that Scott was limited because he grew up in the Borders, an area lacking the stable aristocratic and ecclesiastical traditions necessary for an "organic community". This was in part a hit at MacDiarmid the radical; but MacDiarmid was proud of the lack of conservative rootedness in his native country. Roots, in his poetry, are often symbols of a limiting conservatism rather than positive growth, and when he does use an extended organic metaphor for his poetry, in "My Songs are Kandym in the Waste Land", it is with a distinctive twist: the kandym plant is constantly on the move, putting down new roots, and sacrificing superficial beauty for this tougher resourcefulness. These were the qualities he celebrated in his Border forebears in autobiographical poems like "Kinsfolk" and in his exuberantly Shandean "autobiography", *Lucky Poet* (which deserves reprinting as the best guide to his ideas). From first to last his poetry reflects its origins in a

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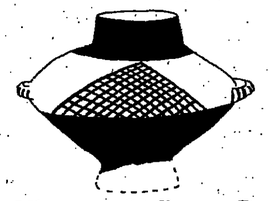

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radical, dissenting, working-class and lower-middle-class culture with a strong commitment to self-education. His frequently expressed impatience with the masses sprang not from a belief that "high culture" must be the prerogative of a traditional élite but from an autodidact's impatience with those from his own social background who failed to follow his example and claim it as a common human inheritance. This is the impulse behind his often irritating intellectual name-dropping.

If Grieve was quintessentially a Borderman, "Hugh MacDiarmid" is a synthetic name with a wider scope: in choosing a Highland name he sought to yoke together in his persona the quite distinct cultural traditions of North and South. In his ornate translation of Duncan Ban MacIntyre's superb "The Praise of Ben Dorain", and in the stately "Lament for the Great Music", he struggled to revive awareness of Highland culture. But the first appearance of "Hugh MacDiarmid" was not in verse but in a prose dialogue, "Nisbet" (1922), which reveals further dimensions of the persona. The brooding, visionary poet Nisbet is presented with a choice between Duthie, a genial Fabian, and Young, a committed Leninist. Duthie warns that Young "stands before you like a sculptor before a mass of marble": he will mould the poet in the Party's required image. But Nisbet cannot "tuck it all away neatly into a sonnet" as Duthie does: the implication is that he should take the necessary risk of assuming that he will be able to use the Party more than the Party can use him. The dialogue form is important: the persona of "Hugh MacDiarmid", as distinct from Nisbet, represents not so much a fixed position as an aspiration towards some as yet barely conceivable synthesis of socialism and nationalism, reformism and revolution, art and political action.

It was under the name of MacDiarmid that Grieve turned from writing sonnets in English to Scots lyrics. The volumes of early lyrics need to be seen in this context: not as a lapse into parochialism but as a move towards a politically conscious modernism. Some of the lyrics, such as "Crowdieknowe", delight in the rebellious irreverence he found in the Border people of his childhood. But he was always anxious to avoid any descent into "common sense", into a populism that could easily become conservative, affirming local traditions as part of a natural order. Some of the most celebrated Scots lyrics suddenly shift from a regional to a cosmic perspective, and their use of language is not directly populist. The key words of "The Eemis Stane" were not part of everyday speech but were derived from a dictionary. By resurrecting phrases that had passed out of popular currency he was able to achieve a kind of alienation effect, playing a chill of remoteness, of the written, against the expected intimacy of the dialect form, of colloquial speech. In "The Eemis Stane" the poet sees the world as from an immense distance, as a tombstone with an indecipherable inscription. The text cannot be read because it is overgrown first of all with the moss of fame and the lichen of history – that is, the "organic" traditions and superstitions which the radical poet rejects – and secondly with the poet's own memories. He must repudiate his subjectivity, finding himself not in direct self-expression but in long-dead phrases. The ideal glossing for poems like these would indicate far more clearly than the *Complete Poems* does the particular source or linguistic register of the words, preferably at the foot of each page.

MacDiarmid's best poem, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), has been described by Tom Nairn as a "national poem on the impossibility of nationalism". The narrator finds himself locked into an uncomfortable double bind, or self-crucifixion, in that the only way he can try to criticize and reform his nation is by revaluing symbols which have become indelibly associated with complacent conservatism – the platitudes of Burns Night, the central symbol of the thistle. The poem enacts an elaborate argument between the thistle, which becomes associated with rootedness in the Scots dialect and Scottish traditions, and the moonlight, emblem of enlightened universality; this is also an argument between language and consciousness. The poem celebrates the bawdy, irreverent aspects of the Scots language but nevertheless aspires at the end towards a condition beyond particular languages, in a lyrical invocation of silence. This dialectic of language and silence is a recurrent feature of the poetry down to *In Memoriam James Joyce*. The silence is sometimes equated with God and in many ways MacDiarmid is a mystical poet, groping for images of the inexpressible, such as light and pure water. This mystical vision is central to his political outlook, providing a transcendent standpoint from which social traditions must be criticized. And yet he is also fiercely critical both of traditional religion and of mysticism that becomes vague and misty, as in the conventional imagery of the "Celtic Twilight". The successor to *A Drunk Man*, *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, was originally planned as a visionary poem in which the Drunk Man would get rid of the thistle and move towards a state of enlightened consciousness. But the poem is also sceptical about premature moves towards transcendence, echoing T. E. Hulme's criticisms of "spilt religion" and its artistic consequences: "men hate poems dry and hard and needs / Maun hae them fozy [rotten] wi' infinity".

There are some fine evocations of the poet's delight in finding the precise, concrete term, "while a' the diction'ry rejoices". But whereas Hulme was nostalgic for a pre-Reformation order, MacDiarmid bore the stamp of his nation's Calvinist and rationalist traditions. He could not rest satisfied with an imagist poetic: even his most condensed lyrics point beyond organic unity, aiming at a vision that is both transcendent and precise: a poetry that might be described as dry with infinity – "God through the wrong end of a telescope". His conception of God is ultimately more rhetoricaly than mystical: one poem compares the word "God" to a "cheville", a word inserted into a poem to fill out the rhyme or metre, a falling-back on an imprecise term where a precise one is not yet available. The transcendent whiteness is Mallarmé's blank paper. Although poetry constantly aspires to a state beyond language, it recognizes that that state may be no more than the necessary condition of language and ultimately inseparable from it. In *Cencrastus* the central metaphor, borrowed from Valéry, is that of the snake, constantly on the move like the involutions of syntax and thought.

MacDiarmid's next volume, *First Hymn to Lenin and Other Poems*, marks a shift towards a more direct engagement with contemporary social issues. This development has sometimes been seen as the corruption of a pure lyric gift by the need to kow-tow to the Party. But the public poems of the early 1930s were originally intended to form only part of *Clann Albann*, "a big scheme in which the diverse points of view would be balanced against each other". The new *Complete Poems* arrangement makes it hard to reconstruct this scheme, which the poet eventually abandoned, but the Lenin poems were to be related to the fine autobiographical poems of this period, the sternly public set against the lyrically private.

This technique – already rehearsed in "Nisbet" – epitomizes MacDiarmid's central tenet: "I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur Extremes meet". He believed that the truth emerged out of the clash of radically antagonistic positions, so that it is always a mistake to take any of his comments too literally. The most repellent element in his political poetry, the defence of Lenin's régime in its most repressive forms, springs less from "scientific socialism" than from his seeing in Leninism, as Blok had done in "The Scythians", a fusion of Eastern and Western traditions, part of the "East-West synthesis" he long championed. Lenin is a "barbarian saviour o' civilization", and the titles of the poems to him are consciously oxymoronic. This does not exonerate the "First Hymn"; but his Thirties poetry does need to be read with an eye for contradictions, and is not the work of a mouthpiece of the Communist Party – which expelled him for nationalist deviation not long after he first joined.

Some of his poems do follow a fairly orthodox "socialist realist" line, invoking workers or adopting their voices – in one (rather later) poem a factory hand tells us what strange things Maggie Mackay does to him by the way she handles her vertical capstan lathe. Sometimes his search for a direct, prophetic voice achieves a concentrated political intensity rare in the "leftist" poetry of the 1930s; but there are more misses than hits, too many poems that become mere exhortation or vituperation – a hundred pages of the *Complete Poems* are given up to an attack on Roy Campbell, who is dispatched effectively enough in the short "Taureau". Many of the polemical poems are technically inept, a left-wing version of McGonagall. It has been seriously suggested that his sense of rhythm was permanently impaired when he fell on his head from the top of a double-decker bus. The true explanation is rather more complex. First of all, his sense of political urgency led him to write far too quickly and pad out his lines with an incongruous mixture of journalistic clichés and Victorian poeticisms. And yet he knew that the more outspoken he became the less chance he had of being published; there was little incentive for careful polishing. Moreover, he had reservations about the possibility of reaching the people directly: he had spent many years combating the sub-Burnsian verse that tried to do just that. His objections had been precisely political: by appealing too directly to stock responses, populist verse risked reinforcing traditional prejudices. Political changes must go hand-in-hand with changes in language; he would have rejected the idea that his polemical poems were political while the others were not.

Thus, while some parts of *Clann Albann* insist on the need to make poetry more accessible, other poems adopt the opposite, extreme position: poetry must become ever more complex, regardless of immediate popularity. This debate is built into poems like "The Oon Olympian", which attacks what was becoming the orthodox line in the Soviet Union: a demand for Party writers to simplify their style combined with a reverential attitude towards the great poets of the past. (The "addled Olympian" in question was Goethe; the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* had censured an article on him by Walter Benjamin for being too political.) MacDiarmid argues that there is an underlying conservatism behind the apparently revolutionary nature of the Party's demands:

Let Lunatscharskies blether on
O' . . . "divine montiments o' ancient thought"
The psyche's the richt to revolution tae. . .

The duty of poets is not just to bring preformed truths to the masses but to expand the field of consciousness; they must have the right both to deal irreverently with poets of the past who have been too cautious – MacDiarmid engages in a witty if unjust "flyting" of Goethe – and to push forward their linguistic experiments in the present. MacDiarmid in fact often presents Lenin as a type of the radical poet. In "The Skeleton of the Future", as in "The Eemis Stane", we are presented with an inscription in the rock, a text which cannot be easily naturalized and thus shocks the reader into awareness: the Cyrillic letters which spell out "Lenin", a name even more synthetic than "MacDiarmid". But in the end he proclaims politics inferior to poetry in the business of changing consciousness. He uncompromisingly championed *Ulysses* and *Work in Progress*, of all contemporary texts the ones most likely to scandalize the commissars. The *Clann Albann* conception included both "The Seamless Garment", with its debunking of poetic techniques and its claim that "I canna' think o' a rhyme", and "Depth and the Chthonian Image", a visionary poem with an exceptionally intricate rhyme-scheme. The title of the *Scots Unbound* volume links political liberation with renewed experiments in the Scots dialect. Here again the Scots used is more dictionary-based than colloquial and there is an open tribute to Joyce's "Anna Livia Plurabelle" episode; but MacDiarmid does draw on the startling frankness about sexual matters to be found in some Scots dialects. "Tarras" is a celebration at once of sexuality, of the Scottish landscape, and of language; this "Bolshevik bog" is "Bolshie" in a manner quite different from the cultural and sexual puritanism instituted by Stalin.

Yet satire and irreverence formed only one part of his poetic project. Radical poetry, he believed, had to achieve the affirmative, the heroic, at a time when conservative poets were limited to nostalgia and defensive irony. The title of one of his best poems of the 1930s, "On a Raised Beach", alludes not only to the "shingle-shelf" on which the poet is sitting but also to the sublime. But the heroic is no longer to be found in images of past aristocratic splendour: consciously repudiating *The Waste Land*, the poet declares that "this is no heap of broken images". At the beginning and end of the poem he does heap up a pile of apparently random and unpoetic words, abrasive geological and rhetorical terms as difficult to naturalize and humanize as the heaped rocks or the huge spans of time in which class society is merely a brief incident. The beach-text also resists orthodox religious readings: the geologist Hugh Miller had used fossils preserved on raised beaches to confound the Mosaic chronology, but his own attempt to save the appearances proved equally vulnerable. By steadily confronting the "inoppugnable reality" of the stones, however, adjusting to their strange rhythms and vibrations, by recognizing the limits of his own consciousness, MacDiarmid is able to achieve a kind of affirmation. This is a poem that gave him a lot of difficulty, as is made clear by the draft printed by Catherine Kerrigan in *Whaur Extremes Meet*. It is a pity that room could not be found in the Penguin for this draft, which reveals more clearly the reflexive element: there are quotations from Valéry and even from F. R. Leavis, and some uncertainties of tone and odd jumps in the argument indicate that he has not fully mastered his sources. But what distinguishes MacDiarmid from many more recent linguistically self-conscious writers is his ability to shift into a register of forceful simplicity: "These stones go through Man, straight to God, if there is one". He put his whole life behind his linguistic games: the poem charts a battle against suicide which he fought, and won.

From 1935 onwards, MacDiarmid's dissatisfaction with conventional notions of poetic form makes it more and more difficult to find unifying structures. Individual sentences become more and more syntactically elaborate, spawning clauses that take on an autonomous life and develop into separate poems; it becomes impossible to contain these centrifugal forces. In the "Author's Note" to the *Complete Poems* he finally abandoned the project of assembling the later fragments into a single poem or sequence. The closest he came to a finished long poem was *In Memorian James Joyce*. This looks like a treatise on linguistics, and the later work has been described as a "scientific" poetry of "fact". But although he was anxious to build a bridge between the "two cultures" and included much scientific – and pseudo-scientific – information, his concern was not so much with the facts themselves as with a juxtaposition of different viewpoints, with the silence beyond the different discourses:

– And all this here, everything I write, of course
Is an extended metaphor for something I never
mention

In Memoriam James Joyce presents linguistics not only as a science but also as a celebration of the infinite complexity of human languages. MacDiarmid was fond of Burns's line, "Liberty's a glorious feast"; but for him it was also a great feast of language. It is easy to read the late MacDiarmid too solemnly; drawing on the encyclopedic, quotation-studded discourse of Renaissance learned wit, he was not above mocking his display of real or affected erudition. *In Memoriam James Joyce* is suitably paradoxical in form, being an argument in English against the adoption of English as a world language.

MacDiarmid regarded his life's work as essentially a stimulus to the production of future poetry, a manifesto more than a finished achievement. His constant anxiety to get on to the next experiment meant that all too often his poems were stronger in conception than in execution. The *Complete Poems* is full of plunges from the sublime to the ridiculous; it is far more uneven than most collections by major poets. And yet no selection could adequately represent the scale and boldness of his poetic project; it is necessary to see MacDiarmid whole. He is often clumsy, crude and eccentric; he is never slick, bland or vacuous. In his own words:

Surrendering and dispersing his identity
He yet made the world feel him at last
As something tough, something singular, something
feathery with life.

A life without the wife

Sylvia Freedman

MILLICENT HAY
The Life of Robert Sidney: Earl of Leicester 1563–1626
260pp. Associated University Presses. £27.50.
0918016703

Robert Sidney was the younger brother of the more famous Philip. Born at Penshurst in 1563, he spent much of his time and energy – far from dispensing largesse in idyllic splendour as Ben Jonson's poem might suggest – in the Queen's service as Governor of Flushing. Home-sick, he would begin scheming for his next leave on the day of his departure. For, at twenty-one he married a young heiress, Barbara Gamage, and with their large family they established a life of domestic comfort idealized in Jonson's poem.

Sidney, an interesting character in the wings of Elizabethan history, came into the spotlight in 1974 with the exciting discovery, by P. J. Croft, of a notebook containing sixty-six poems in his handwriting. His verse was subjected to critical appraisal – inevitably inviting comparison with his brother's – culminating in Croft's definitive edition, published last year (and reviewed in the *TLS* on October 26). While this contained a long introduction rich in biographical information, it did not purport to be a full-scale biography – a task that Millicent Hay has now undertaken.

What she has given us is more a history than a biography. The historical biographer needs to have a strong sense of his subject's identity if he is to steer his readers through the tangle of daily events. Strands of the life have to be separated. Mrs Hay has concentrated on the military career, presenting a convincing picture of the difficulties, discomforts and frustrations of life in an English outpost for a man with ambitions for a court life. She is less attentive to the personal and domestic centre of the life. It is only in Chapter Eight (out of ten chapters) that we begin to see Sidney's wife and discover that they had eleven children. Any inkling that he was a poet, closet or otherwise, emerges only in the penultimate chapter. Yet these are surely among the most interesting and important parts of the life.

Hay is fortunate in having so much original material on which to draw, notably Robert's letters to his wife and his correspondence with his indefatigable agent at court, Rowland Whyte. Yet she does not appear to have examined the originals closely. Should we be told (p182) that two printed versions of a letter conflict, when the original is available? She compounds this with misreading the tone of the letter, describing it as a "diatribe" on his wife's handling of the children, when, in the context, it is, more interestingly, a plea for his right to have a say in their upbringing: "you must remember, I have a part in them, as well as you". I should like to have had more about Barbara. Barely literate, yet marrying into perhaps the most literary family of the day (the Countess of Pembroke completed the triumvirate of sibling poets in the Sidney family), Barbara devoted herself so singlemindedly to her children that she did not have the appropriate clothes to go to court to solicit another leave for her husband.

There is at Penshurst a painting of Barbara with six of her children. She stands, formal yet motherly, her hands gently touching her sons, her daughters already beginning to model their pose on hers. It is not reproduced in this book. Indeed, apart from the frontispiece of Robert Sidney, the illustrations consist of maps and tables – in keeping with the military emphasis. Could we not have had a facsimile of a letter or a poem? Through these, the excitement for the biographer of handling his subject's own writings can be shared with the reader.

There are problems of tone that have not always been solved. Such sentences as, "If the Sidneys regularly socialized with the likes of Bedford and Cumberland, they ran with a very fast crowd", and "Carmichael was not buying a word . . ." sit uneasily. The book is not without factual errors. Lord Mountjoy (who appears at one point as Lord Montgomery) seems, in this account, to have gone to Ireland as its Governor before the Earl of Essex, instead of after.

The book ends with the date, time and place of Sidney's death: there is no attempt to assess the life. What was the impulse behind this book? Was the author inspired with enthusiasm on the discovery of the poems? She gives no clue.

Cynics at the centre

Kevin Sharpe

TIMOTHY EUSTACE (Editor)
Statesmen and Politicians of the Stuart Age
269pp. Macmillan. £20 (paperback, £6.95).
0333318269

For some years the scholarly biography went out of fashion in history. As a consequence some of the leading and more colourful figures even of the much-researched seventeenth century remain unstudied, and the biographies of others need rewriting in the light of the research that has undermined earlier conceptions of the society and politics of Stuart England. *Statesmen and Politicians* does not pretend to such ambitions, however; it offers – primarily to students – ten brief biographical sketches intended to capture both the important men and issues of the age. These essays are not the product of original research but either, as in the case of that on John Pym, an able synthesis of earlier works, or, in most other cases, a condensed version of one established authority: Menna Prestwich on Cranfield, Roger Lockyer on Buckingham, or John Kenyon on Sunderland. This is understandable but unfortunate, for though some of the essays are sound summaries, and contain some criticisms and new suggestions, they cannot replace the fuller studies; the authors might have performed a more useful service had they turned to leading figures of the period, such as the Earls of Salisbury or Warwick, who await a good biography.

Nevertheless the figures who have been chosen – Wentworth and Laud, Clarendon, Danby and Shaftesbury – certainly lead one to the centre of Stuart government and politics: to finance and foreign affairs, court and council, parliament and party. Curiously, none of the essays seizes on or elucidates the religious passions of our century of keenest religious controversy. Anti-popery stalks this volume as it did the age, but the religious commitments of those studied here remain in the shadows, with the exception only of those of Sir Henry Vane, whose antinomian views made him extraordinary. The essay on William Laud is the weakest in the collection.

What emerges most clearly from these studies is the darker side of human nature, or at least of those then involved in public life. The issues and disagreements of the age – over the authority of the Crown, the security of Protestantism, law and property – are all here, but they are dominated by factional intrigue, by personal animosities, manoeuvring for place and cynical changes of policy in order to stay in power. This is a healthy corrective to any over-emphasis on idealism, but it may go too far: it is helpful to know of Wentworth's political ambitions in Yorkshire and at court, but we should not ignore the principles by which, as he told his own friends, he conducted his public life. Politics is perhaps always an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile principles with interests, but because this volume finds no room for an analysis of the court or the government (the introduction helps little here), and because the central figures of the monarchs are pushed into the background, seventeenth-century politics appear more irrational, bewildering and self-interested than in fact they were. More seriously, the important political changes which, for example, contributed to the fall of Clarendon and Danby never clearly emerge.

Statesmen and Politicians is not a book for the scholar, nor for those who know nothing of the period. The less satisfactory essays – on Danby and Clarendon for instance – slip into a breathless narrative which leaves important questions unasked. The portraits of Pym, Shaftesbury and Sunderland, however, not only make good sense of the men and their circumstances, they offer some useful revisions of traditional views. For all Pym's alleged championship of a "middle group", as Jonathan Watts puts it, "he always sided with extremists in the end"; while Shaftesbury, Timothy Eustace argues, made the mistake, since repeated by several historians, of underestimating Charles II's abilities and commitment to principles.

My final regret is that the authors missed the opportunity of making fuller use of their subjects' own writings – Laud's works, Vane's *A Healing Question*, or Clarendon's *Life and History*. For there can be no doubt that these provide the most stimulating and incisive introduction to both the writers themselves and the century.

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Stout and uncollapsed

Frank O'Gorman

B. W. HILL
British Parliamentary Parties 1742–1832: From the fall of Walpole to the first Reform Act
272pp. Allen and Unwin. £18.
0 04 942188 3

Did British political parties enjoy an uninterrupted history and experience an unbroken line of development from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries? According to a well-established (and still repeated) orthodoxy stretching back to Sir Lewis Namier over half a century ago, both Whig and Tory parties ceased to exist in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Whigs could not survive as a party the monopoly of office established by Walpole, sustained by the Pelhams, continued by North and reformed by Pitt the Younger. The Tories, weakened by proscription and demoralized by decades of failure, could not survive the accession of George III and the olive branches he held out to them. Party development, thus disrupted, was not resumed until the emergence of an industrialized society and, as Namier was apt to remark, the appearance of a mass electorate in the later decades of the nineteenth century.

B. W. Hill, in the second volume of a two-volume work surveying the history of parliamentary parties from 1689 to 1832, argues for a substantial modification of this view. Namier's contention that the Tory party disintegrated soon after the accession of George III has "little basis in fact". Most Tories rallied round the court and its short-lived governments: "Together the King's Friends and the Old Tories helped to form the ministerial party which emerged as the alternative to the Whigs of Newcastle and Rockingham." Some pangs of old country-party conscience were felt over the treatment meted out to Wilkes but these were soon forgotten during the conflict with the American colonists. In the 1790s the old Tory traditions had merged into the new veneration of Church and King and the gospel of obedience to government. The label "Tory" began to reappear in defence of Pitt's far from Whiggish repressive measures and within two decades was back in common use as a description of one of the great parties in the state.

Similarly, important continuities can be traced in the history of the Whig party. In a useful synthesis of existing research, Hill outlines the continuities of personnel and purpose which linked the old corps, the Rockingham Whigs and, later, the Foxites. Underpinning the differences of style and context which separate the Whigs of successive generations lie the consistent objectives of Whig politics: to repulse the House of Stuart, to limit the independence of action of the Hanoverian monarchy, to vest the government of the country in the "Revolution families" and to exercise that government through the use of royal power, patronage and prerogatives.

In carefully tracing these developments, Hill has left all scholars in his debt. The first three chapters of his admirably concise and lucid book offer an interpretative synthesis of the chronological narrative to be found in the other ten. The lines of development which he detects are far more compelling than the confusing mixture of insight and assertion which informed the pontifications of Namier on this subject. (What Hill has to say about his influential view that North was the heir of Newcastle is cruel, yet credible.)

Hill's case, then, is a good one but it could have been argued to more effect than it is here. He could have developed the theme of ideological continuity much more seriously. What, for example, did the Tories of the 1760s contribute at the ideological level to the monarchy of George III both in the permissive and in the positive sense? Where is this Toryism to be found, in its sustained, articulated form? And what connects it to the (very different) Toryism of the 1790s? These and other questions should have been considered, perhaps at the expense of some of the space devoted to the comings and goings of ministries and the sessional antics of oppositionists.

Furthermore, Hill concentrates almost exclusively upon the centre. The world of the party activist, the canvasser, the agent, the candidate, the campaign and the committee man does not appear in this book. The communities of Hanoverian Britain were marked by vigorous traditions of political involvement and a rich and vibrant political culture. Here the old party traditions lingered longer and more powerfully than they did at Westminster. And here the newer issues of concern – about George III, about Wilkes, about America, about Reform, about Fox and Pitt and the constitution, about religious toleration and about the French Revolution – created waves of partisan political activity which broke over the outworks of a superficially anachronistic political world before receding.

Tugs on the diplomats

H. T. Dickinson

JEREMY BLACK
British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole
202pp. Edinburgh: Donald. £16.
0 85976 126 6

The diplomatic history of eighteenth-century Britain is often condemned, even by many in the historical profession, as a desiccated subject best left to a handful of dedicated practitioners and justifiably ignored by those interested in other aspects of the century. This neglect is understandable, for often little attempt is made to integrate a study of tedious, complex and convoluted diplomatic manoeuvres into the political, still less the economic and social, life of the nation. These criticisms apply particularly to works on British diplomacy between the end of the War of the Spanish Succession and the outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession. The subject of Jeremy Black's *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole* therefore appears to be unpromising material, but it is greatly to his credit that he has succeeded in making it attractive and relevant to those not normally attracted to the diplomatic history of this period.

Dr Black has combed nearly fifty archives for manuscript material and he has read impressively widely in several languages. He probably knows as much about British diplomacy in the 1720s and 1730s as any scholar now alive. The fruits of his research have appeared in a doctoral thesis, a stream of recent articles and now in this handsomely produced and reasonably priced volume. What makes the book a particularly valuable contribution to our understanding, however, is the way Black has decided to structure his argument.

In his first chapter he provides a succinct and tolerably clear account of the course of British foreign policy between 1713 and 1740. He follows this with eight brisk chapters, each analysing different internal and external influences on the formulation and, to a lesser extent, the execution of this policy. In the first of these analytical chapters the influence of the Crown in foreign affairs is stressed and British foreign policy shown to have been distorted for Hanoverian ends. The influence of the Secretaries of State, the career diplomats and leading politicians is then investigated. A chapter examines Parliament's influence on foreign policy, and Black concludes that the standard of debate was much higher than has been generally recognized. This is followed by an account of the efforts made to use diplomacy to protect Britain's commercial interests, though divisions within competing pressure groups made it difficult for ministers to formulate a clear and effective foreign policy.

In perhaps his least successful chapter Black investigates the possible influence of religion on British foreign policy and succeeds only in explaining Britain's failure to establish good relations with those other Protestant powers, Prussia and the United Provinces. His chapter on the influence of Jacobitism relies heavily on the work of other scholars, though there are some perceptive comments on how the Jacobite threat influenced relations with France. More original is Black's discussion of how the ministry, the opposition and even foreign powers exploited the growing influence of the press in Britain to further their views on foreign policy and of how the press created a climate of opinion that helped to shape foreign views of British strength and British perceptions of the government's conduct of foreign policy. In his concluding chapter Black pursues this discussion of the contemporary debate and insists that it was generally well informed, perceptive and vigorous.

Each chapter makes a different contribution to an understanding of how British foreign policy was formulated and each can be read in isolation as distinct essays on particular topics. On the other hand, this approach has its limitations. The text is too short to allow Black fully to develop his arguments or to display his evidence. Although he makes excellent use of quotations from primary sources and generally writes well, he has to compress his material to such an extent that many readers may not have the prior knowledge needed to appreciate his arguments. Moreover, there is some repetition because of the need to refer to the same evidence in several chapters when examining the formulation of British foreign policy from a number of different standpoints. Scholars can read individual chapters of Black's book with profit, and students familiar with the course of British diplomacy will learn much from his shrewd comments, but he has not quite managed to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. He has, however, produced a study of his subject that deserves to be more widely read than any other.

The setting of the monument

David Womersley

J. W. BURROW
Gibbon
117pp. Oxford University Press. £76.95 (paperback, £1.95).
0 19 287553 1

When only recently delivered of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon wrote to his stepmother that "I look back with amazement on the road which I have travelled; but which I should never have entered had I been previously apprized of its length". It is a remark which indicates the major problem confronting any critic who considers *The Decline and Fall*. We rightly demand of criticism that it should not simply marvel at literature. But amazement is so central to *The Decline and Fall* that any criticism of Gibbon's great work which tried straightforwardly to banish the marvellous would merely maim itself. Gibbon's critic must teach us "with reason to admire".

J. W. Burrow's *Gibbon*, in the Past Masters series, is always tactfully aware of this peculiar difficulty in writing about *The Decline and Fall*; and this is its sovereign virtue. We are guided round that extraordinary monument of erudition and intelligence by an observer who has pondered not only the work itself, but also the best modern criticism it has inspired, and who expresses his own judicious astonishment in a style which is graceful, lucid and firm. After a sketch of Gibbon's life, and a brief review of his important earlier works and the historiographic issues they raise (such as historical Pyrrhonism), Burrow examines *The Decline and Fall* under the four headings of "Rome", "Christianity", "Barbarism" and "Civilization". What he offers is not so much a reading of the history as a meditation on the importance of these four interrelated ideas in both Gibbon's work and that of his important contemporaries. This approach produces some notable successes: in particular, Burrow handles the question of whether or not Gibbon was a philosophic historian with unusual delicacy and fairness. And one may say that, in general, the student of Gibbon will get a sharper sense of where the true vitality of *The Decline and Fall* resides from Burrow's book than from any comparable study.

However, although Burrow helps us to see where we may find the life of *The Decline and Fall*, he is not equally illuminating about the forms that life takes. There is an imbalance in his handling of the competing claims of text and context. We are given fine accounts of ideas such as "civic virtue", and of terms such as "Augustan", in which pertinent complexity is not sacrificed to brevity. But we are not shown how those ideas and terms are inflected when drawn into *The Decline and Fall*. Too often the quotations from Gibbon's text feel subordinate; it is as if they were being introduced merely to illustrate the context. Take, for example, the debate on critical method which arises out of historical Pyrrhonism. In joining that debate, Gibbon also transforms it: it raises more than critical issues in *The Decline and Fall*, and expands until it touches Gibbon's ideas on human nature itself. (Gibbon would not have subscribed to the modern division of philosophy of history into the speculative and the critical.) Burrow does not fully acknowledge these transformations; and because he does not pause to show us how the context is modified in the text, *The Decline and Fall* sometimes seems to disappear from the discussion, to be replaced by a vivid background figure (such as Adam Smith, on whom Burrow touches luminously). Gibbon, we are rightly assured, "is not simply a transparent medium for the facts"; it is a failing of this book that *The Decline and Fall* occasionally seems a transparent medium for its intellectual setting.

Perhaps this criticism amounts to little more than regret that Professor Burrow was unable to give his thoughts the space they deserve. Despite my cavil, it is hard to conceive of the job being done better in the same compass. Closing the book, the reader looks back in amazement on the shortness of the road he has travelled.

Originating in a bicentenary conference at the London School of Economics, *The Foreign Office, 1782–1982*, edited by Roger Bullen (141pp. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America. $20. 0 89093 492 4), contains papers by Charles R. Middleton on the Office's foundation, Kenneth Bourne on it under Palmerston, Agatha Ramm on Lord Salisbury, Alan Sharp on Curzon and Valerie Cromwell and Zara Steiner on reform and retrenchment between the wars.

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A missionary among the Ming

Jacques Gernet

JONATHAN D. SPENCE
The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci
350pp. Faber. £15.
0 571 13239 1

Jonathan D. Spence, already the author of some excellent books on Manchu China, has now given us a thoroughly researched and documented study of the life and times of the famous Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, who was born in Macerata, south of Ancona, and died in Peking (Beijing) in 1610. Ricci was the first missionary who managed to settle in the Ming capital and may be considered as the founder of the Jesuit mission in China, which played such a major part in the mutual exchanges between China and Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the arts, sciences, technology, institutions and ideas. Much research remains to be done into the history of these exchanges, but that is not the aim of Spence's book, which seeks to make us better acquainted with Ricci and his times: Italy in the late sixteenth century; the education and intellectual climate that shaped the future missionary; sea travel between Lisbon and the Indian coast; life in the Portuguese trading-posts of Goa and Macao.

The information about Europe and Italy in the sixteenth century, and about Ricci himself, is admirably accurate: Spence has gone thoroughly into all his correspondence, and that of his superiors and companions, as well as Ricci's record of the start of his mission entitled *Della entrata della compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina*. For once, the Italian original of this important work has been used, and not Louis Gallagher's English translation, *China in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1953), which is regularly cited in English-language publications but which was taken from a Latin *rifacimento* of Ricci's text made by Nicolas Trigault to appeal to European readers. This first Latin translation, published in Augsburg in 1615, was a considerable best-seller which went into new editions in the two following years and in 1623 and 1624, and was translated into French (1616, 1617, 1618), German (1617), Spanish (1621) and even Italian (1622). As Spence points out, the text translated by Gallagher is "full of distortions, deletions and additions to the original". But the fate of Ricci's manuscript was shared by most of the books and letters written by missionaries in China. It was actually thought necessary to make them more attractive, and above all more edifying for their readers, by substantial alterations and excisions, so that the image of China that Europe was to form through them would be closer to readers' expectations. Thus, whenever he can, Trigault adds a few touches to show the Chinese, as agnostics or followers of Buddhism, in a less favourable light.

Spence's book is a pleasure to read. His exact and colourful descriptions convey something of what it must have been like for Ricci and for all those who were then setting out to convert the countries of the Far East. The work of someone who is both a scholar and a writer, the book is made up of a series of comparisons and rapprochements: between Ricci and the founder of the Company of Jesus; between a particular passage from the Bible and a historical event in Italy or China; between the sufferings of a Chinese convert subjected to Chinese justice and the Passion of Christ; and so on.

The book is built around representations of the "memory palace" and a series of pious images which supply the theme of each chapter. The "memory palace" is a mnemonic device which was apparently widespread in the sixteenth century and which consisted in the construction of an imaginary palace furnished with symbolic characters or objects. Though he dressed as a Buddhist monk from the time he first settled in the region of Canton in 1583, Ricci only really came into contact with the educated ruling classes after 1595, the date at which he exchanged the yellow robe of the monk for the silk garments of the scholar. In Nanchang, the present capital of Jiangxi, 500 kilometres to the south of Nankin, he captivated the local scholars, magistrates and imperial nobility by his prodigious feats of memory, and it was doubtless at the urging of some of them that he composed, in 1596, a little manual in Chinese explaining how to construct a "memory palace". But it appears that the Chinese were not greatly taken with the device, which no doubt seemed too artificial to them.

The pious images which supply Spence with the theme for some of his chapters are four prints illustrating passages from the Gospels. Ricci added captions to them and in 1606 a certain Cheng Dayue, a printmaker, painter and designer of patterns for ink-stones, reproduced them in a well-known album of drawings and illustrations, thereby showing the same curiosity about things European as other Chinese of his time.

The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci contains an abundance of information on Macerata in the sixteenth century, on education in Jesuit colleges and their emphasis on Greek and Latin literature (carefully expurgated), and on the teaching of mathematics, rhetoric and moral philosophy. Pupils were trained in debate and future missionaries supplied with a series of logical arguments against pagan beliefs. All of which is useful in helping us to understand how Ricci tried to associate with the cultured, ruling classes, to win their sympathy and how he undertook to convert them (though with caution, in view of his isolation). He took full advantage of what he had learnt as a young man in the Roman college. The map of the world which he drew up on first arriving in the province of Canton, his training in mathematics and what he taught them about Aristotelian physics and the astronomical ideas of Antiquity, were intended to arouse the curiosity of the Chinese and in fact did so; though they drew strong criticism from the missionaries in Macao and from the Jesuit hierarchy, who found it scandalous that the Chinese should be taught anything except a knowledge of Scripture.

As for the books designed to open their minds to the true religion, these consisted of small moral tracts which Ricci had written in Chinese, making use of his exceptional memory; and one major work, *The True Meaning [of the doctrine] of the Master of Heaven*, in which he attacks Buddhist beliefs and endeavours to demonstrate the existence of a Creator, and of hell and heaven. In dealing with Ricci's education, Spence ought perhaps to have mentioned medieval scholasticism, traces of whose methods of reasoning and classification are to be found throughout this long work in Chinese. *The True Meaning [of the doctrine] of the Master of Heaven*, whose style was improved by a Chinese friend of Ricci's, is an undoubted success because it manages to convey elegantly, in a language designed for allusion and compression, the sometimes weighty and tedious proofs of scholasticism. When Ricci and the celebrated convert Xu Guangqi came to translate the first six books of the *Elements* of Euclid, they faced even greater difficulties.

As Spence remarks, Ricci assigned an important place in his moral treatises to his recollections of Seneca and Epictetus. Stoicism, Christian-style, was fashionable at that time in Europe, but it is doubtful whether these texts, acceptable to the Chinese because they accorded with their own moral traditions, had anything new to say. It seems somewhat exaggerated to write, as Spence does, that "after such messages and teaching had been absorbed by Xu or Li, Ricci could lead them on to the deeper arguments buried within Christian faith itself" – arguments that, he thought, would be set out in *The True Meaning [of the doctrine] of the Master of Heaven*. Similarly, it seems unlikely that the reprinting of this work by certain Chinese curious about foreign novelties, could have helped to propagate the Christian message (p196). Ricci was cautious and said nothing in these Chinese works about what constitutes the essence of Christianity. There is no mention there of the Incarnation or the Passion. In making a brief reference to Jesus at the end of his major treatise, Ricci states only that

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he wanted to arouse curiosity and provoke questions and that he had kept any revelation of the mysteries of Christianity for those whom he held in greatest trust. Spence does not go into the difficulty of adapting religious traditions which were profoundly foreign to Chinese society, the Chinese mentality and Chinese concepts.

The Chinese were deeply shocked by the depictions of nudity, death and violence current in Europe, where religious paintings regularly showed scenes of torture and death. The Crucifixion, the Entombment and the Resurrection, subjects intimately linked to the very basis of Christian belief, appeared inauspicious to the Chinese and aroused genuine repulsion in them. This difference in tastes and sensibilities is not brought out in a book in which China occupies a secondary place and is seen chiefly from outside; though the author does allude to it when he recalls that Ricci was obliged to avoid any depiction of Christ on the cross, offering instead images of the Virgin, with the result that he was unable to convince the Chinese that his God was not a woman.

It is understandable that Jews and Chinese Muslims should have considered him as one of themselves, and that some Chinese at that time should have seen Christianity as a doctrine little different from Judaism or Islam. On this topic, Spence writes of "China's serene indifference to foreigners", although even today Westerners scarcely distinguish between the different peoples of the Far East. And he adds: "the huge and cosmic battle that lay at the heart of European history as Ricci knew it was reduced to a semi-deprecating phrase" when referring to the Emperor Wanli's remark apropos of paintings of the Jesuits done by his court painters: "they are Muslims". But the Chinese had no reason to know anything of this battle. It might even have been better for the Jesuits themselves that the Chinese should know *nothing of the fratricidal* wars between Catholics and Protestants which had stained France *and Germany* with blood during a major part of the sixteenth century. The repercussions in China of the celebrated dispute over the "Chinese rite", which arose in Europe as a result of concessions made by the Jesuits to Chinese usage, was in itself enough to weaken their position.

There are many signs to show that Ricci often appeared to the Chinese as a figure possessing magic powers. There seemed to be something prodigious about his memory: he was able to memorize long Chinese texts by heart and to recite them backwards. Moreover, fearing that he might be taken for a spy in the pay of the Portuguese, he was careful to conceal the origin of his friends and was consequently assumed in China to be a skilled alchemist. Like his companions and his successors, Ricci managed to find cheap lodgings in houses which were supposed to be haunted. The missionaries were consequently held to be able to chase away evil spirits and pestilence and Christian rites to possess magic properties. This was especially true of holy water; there was no lack of stories of miracles effected by its aspersion: cures of the dying, the disappearance of abnormal phenomena, the "possessed" returned to a normal state, etc. The role of exorcist which Christian missionaries were quite willing to play in China explains the ascendency they held over the common people, who found in them an already familiar conception of holiness.

But, as Spence notes, sixteenth-century Europe was still deeply imbued with beliefs in magic, alchemy and astrology. From this point of view, the missionaries shared the same psychological outlook as the Chinese; but while the Chinese, as polytheists and empiricists, sought to discover the particular cause of each supernatural event, by appeal to the appropriate specialists, the missionaries had at their disposal a systematic theology which allowed them to unify all abnormal phenomena by referring them to the Devil. The struggle they everywhere saw between God and Satan, the fundamental, uncompromising opposition between good and evil, and the crucial question of their eternal salvation, imposed on them, as on all Christians, a duty to stamp out heresy and to combat moral deviation. Hence the intolerance and violence that historical conditions strengthened in the sixteenth century and which later extended to the missionary lands. As Spence says: "We must remember that . . . Ricci's career makes sense only in the context of an aggressive Counter-Reformation Catholicism, as part of an expansion of Europe in the later sixteenth century that took place under the guns of Spanish and Portuguese men-of-war . . . ." The Catholicism of the period was sombre in colour, lit only by the fires of the Inquisition.

The book is informative about the persecution of the Jews in Italy, and in Goa and in Cochin, where some of them found refuge after being driven out of Europe. The first burning of a Jew in Goa was in 1543. Bartolomeo de Fonseca, appointed Grand Inquisitor in the town in 1571, gloried in all those "whose fathers and grandfathers I have burned, and whose bones I have disinterred"; and this same Fonseca was to write in triumph in 1578 that he

Matteo Ricci

had "filled the land with fire and ashes from the dead bodies of heretics and apostates". Great *auto-da-fés* took place in 1575 and 1578; out of thirty-six victims, thirty-four were Jews, while homosexuals were also subject to persecution. In Goa, as in Rome, sodomy *in flagrante delicto* was punishable at the stake and Chinese homosexuals were burned alive in Manila by the Spanish between 1580 and 1590. Spence makes interesting observations also on male homosexuality in sixteenth-century Europe and in China and on male prostitution at the end of the Ming dynasty. Always tolerated in China, as it was in Japan, pederasty was commonplace in Buddhist monasteries, which was an additional source of outrage for the missionaries and confirmation for them of the corruption inherent in religions inspired by Satan. Reading Spence, however, it appears that in this respect morals were not much purer in Europe than in China or Japan.

The great difference between China and other missionary lands comes out clearly from the comparisons Spence enables us to make between the methods of evangelization used in the Ming empire and those in the Portuguese trading-posts. Whereas in Goa and in the neighbouring territory of Salsetta, the Jesuits had razed Hindu temples, banned Indian festivals and religious rites, confiscated the possessions of recalcitrant Brahmins and condemned them to the galleys for life, and burned heretics alive, in China they had to make an effort to gain the sympathy of the rulers and of the scholarly class. What is so interesting about the Jesuit mission to China is that it represents an exceptional example of contact between civilizations. Except for Macao, where the Jesuits and the Portuguese ruled as masters, China escaped Portuguese or Spanish rule. But its conquest had been under consideration and Spence evokes the long and heated debates in Mexico and the Philippines between the Jesuits, the Franciscans and the Dominicans on the appropriateness and moral justification for a military conquest of China in view of the obstacles faced there by Christianization. He also recalls the great interest shown by the Spanish in reports of a strategic nature emanating from China; the Chinese were perhaps not always without justification in seeing the missionaries as spies. But the huge extent of the empire, the enormous number of its inhabitants and the strength of its administrative system were such that the idea of conquest had to be abandoned. The Jesuits could not combat local customs, religious rites and beliefs in China as freely as they had been able to do in India. Shocking though this was to the other religious orders and to European opinion, they had to allow converts to continue their ancestor worship and only asked that they should destroy statues, images and books which were considered impious.

Spence records the missionaries' first assessments of China, which inevitably concerned the Cantonese, who are as different from northern Chinese as, say, Scandinavians from Mediterraneans. "Timorous", not ashamed to flee danger and without any concept of honour, the Cantonese argued like women, tearing out each other's hair. They were effeminate, spending two hours a day doing their hair and dressing with meticulous care. Valignano, Ricci's superior, none the less preferred them to the Japanese (whom he originally considered more favourably) and the Goa Indians, for whom he never had anything but contempt. The Chinese, indeed, did not carry arms (they were forbidden to do so by law), they were studious and their women modest. The contrast was striking with the warlike traditions of Europe. Spence describes the permanent climate of violence and war in Italy and especially in Macerata during Ricci's childhood and youth, a description which makes all the more ironical a passage from a work written by the Jesuits in Chinese, where they set out to show the beneficial effects of Christianity on public morals. Composed after Ricci's death it attributes the following words to him (though no doubt quite incorrectly):

In the main it is manifestly evident – I would not dare to exaggerate – in the one thousand six hundred years since our countries became Christian, in more than thirty kingdoms adjacent to one another across more than six thousand square *li*, there has not been a single change of dynasty, not a single war and not the least dispute.

This particular argument weighed heavily in favour of Christianity with the Chinese, and it is a pity that Spence did not pick up this odd apology for Christian Europe.

There are many indications of how closely the position of the missionaries in China was linked to the international context. As a result of the terrible attacks by Sino-Japanese pirates in the mid-sixteenth century, the Chinese seem to have acquired an abiding fear of all threats from outside and a growing obsession with espionage whenever these threats appeared to be more direct. It was not as a missionary, but as a foreigner that Ricci found himself an object of suspicion all over China at the time of the war between Japan and China in Korea, in 1592–98. Similarly, after the massacre of 20,000 Chinese by the Spanish in Manila in 1603, he was chiefly afraid of being taken for a Spaniard. In 1606, after a rumour spread by an Augustinian friar of an unlikely alliance between the Jesuits, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Spanish to invade China, the situation again became tense. A Macaoan who had been converted by the Jesuits was arrested and tortured in Canton not because of his Christian faith but as a suspected spy. But it is customary to describe all those who, even for reasons unconnected with their faith, suffered the rigours of Chinese justice, as "Christian martyrs"; this justice was as barbarous as Europe's, but often more impartial.

There is much more one could say about a book so rich and well-documented; about its descriptions of sea-voyages from Lisbon to Goa, dangerous, overcrowded, accompanied by sickness, foul odours and parasites; about the gifts offered by the missionaries to win the goodwill of important Chinese officials; about the trade between Macao and Nagasaki and the Jesuits' role in it (the main thing for them was not to touch the silk with their own hands and not to set foot in the Chinese markets, in accordance with a form of casuistry similar to that found in Buddhist disciplinary texts). Spence also shows the universality of slavery: there were slaves in Lisbon, slaves taken on board ship while stopping over in Mozambique (most of them destined to die *en route*) as well as Kaffir and Indian slaves kept by the Jesuits in Goa and Macao. Ricci himself had black slaves with him in China, who terrified the Chinese. The Portuguese also seized Chinese, sometimes of good family, and resold them in Macao; according to Ricci this was a way chosen by God to save their souls, since it gave them the opportunity of being baptized.

Finally, Spence briefly recalls the discussions between Ricci and eminent Buddhist monks, and with certain famous scholars and officials. But here he perhaps fails to give an adequate idea of the very large number of acquaintances made by Ricci in China. His intelligence and his talents, his remarkable powers of adaptability, his knowledge of the Chinese language and its written culture, gave him a very considerable reputation there and his name has survived in the memory of the Chinese up to the present time.

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Behind the lines

Lorna Sage

Great writers without critical traditions to back them are a puzzle. For example: What to do with D. H. Lawrence after Leavis? The D. H. Lawrence Centenary Festival (September 7–28) provides one kind of answer. It has succeeded at long last in putting Bert alias Lorenzo to work for the good of the local community. A morning's entries in the Visitors Book at 8A Victoria Street, Eastwood (where he was born on September 11, 1885) tell the story: Austin, Texas; Osaka; Tokyo; Copenhagen; Montpellier; Turku, Finland; Turin; and so on; and Southport. Lawrence country is on the way to joining Hardy country and Brontë country as a place of pilgrimage, and the Festival's Director, Kevin West, points out that journalists looking for signs of the old animosity that once seemed a measure of Lawrence's apartness have come away disappointed. "Before his time", say the ladies at the bus stop patiently. "A bit of a genius. All this sex-business, he foresaw it."

8A has a video-room tacked on now, with reproductions of what the curator describes as "the so-called pornographic paintings" on the walls. Festival events – readings, drama, music, dance, moonlight walks – celebrated the performable, adaptable Lawrence. Phoenixes rose from ashes all over the place: he was taken for a ride on the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire tramway, and serenaded with the *Enigma Variations* by the Desford Colliery Dowty Brass Band; dispersed around the grassy tips and spoil heaps, he came up in flower festivals and commemorations of coal. And even this last exhibition, *The Miner's World*, organized by the Midland Group in Nottingham, with photographs and interspersed texts illustrating the uncomfortable proposition that "Nineteen eighty-five is the Year of the Miner" – even this seemed uncontentious. Lawrence would have approved of the Notts miners' stand, said someone from the Lawrence Society. And probably he would. More, perhaps, than he would have approved his transformation into the Festival's genius, who's a genius of place and community, selflessly brooding over other people's reading their own poetry, the new paintings and sculptures.

★ ★ ★

The old unregenerate Lawrence was hard to glimpse even at the University of Nottingham, where an International Symposium (seventy-odd participants from nineteen countries) discussed "Lawrence and the Modern World". The dispersal went on apace here too. First there was the editorial work: John Worthen from Swansea on "The Restoration of *Women in Love*", showing how Frieda's helping hand in the manuscripts makes it finally impossible to get at Lawrence's text. Then Barbara Hardy ("The Self-Consciousness of D. H. Lawrence") coaxed him into the modern world by focusing on his humour and self-awareness and wry authorial jokes – "the most amusing of all modernist writers about what he was doing, what he was doing at the moment". In picking up on Victorian authorial intrusiveness he was demonstrating a propensity for play (and for true modernity?) we missed when we took him for a mentor and a dark prophet. And so it went on. Professor L.D. Clark from the University of Arizona disagreed, but that was because he saw the same narrative mannerisms as borrowed from Hawthorne, Melville and Cooper. Lawrence wasn't so much an authority on American romance (and founder of a discredited school of mythological criticism), but rather an inheritor and a seeker; the "leadership" novels should be reclassified as "pilgrimage" novels.

The good humour and open-mindedness would have been unbearable, except for a couple of speakers who resisted it (good-humouredly, of course). Mark Kinkaid-Weekes argued that *The Rainbow* was "as densely historical as it was mythic", but that none the less there remained an intractable, essentialist core to the book that wouldn't dissolve. And Professor H.M. Daleski from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem ("Life as a four-letter Word") came right out with it, and said we had in the end to choose: Joyce and Derrida and "playing with oneself", or Lawrence, with all the "defects of his intensities". It was an awkward moment: deconstruction – the really dirty word – had *almost* been spoken. But with a few background mutterings ("He'd never have got away with that at the Sexual Difference conference in Southampton") we survived. The general will was in favour of dismemberment and conservation. Which, it seems from all the signs, is the best we can do for the old boy now. David Lodge spells it out in the Centenary issue of Nottingham *Renaissance and Modern Studies* (Volume XXIX, 1985). Once (only eight years ago, in fact) he'd written that Lawrence's narrative voice "is always basically the same . . . . Not for him the mimicry, the pastiche, the rapid shifts of voice and linguistic register, that we encounter in Joyce". Now, though, he's found a loophole, "through which writers not obviously recognised as carnivalesque . . . can nevertheless be accommodated", in Bakhtin's concept of "reduced laughter". Which is not a bad phrase for the whole Symposium's embarrassed mode. Do we really believe it? Has Lawrence become a playful metafictionist, a glum giggle?

★ ★ ★

There are two exhibitions that deserve a special mention. *D. H. Lawrence – A Life in Literature*, at the University, is a meticulous and moving record that conjures up an altogether more familiar (angry, afflicted, intransigent) figure, via photographs, letters, manuscripts, proofs, first editions, "Trial" records and paintings. And *D. H. Lawrence and the Visual Arts* at Nottingham Castle Museum brings together "works of art that [he] admired, copied or wrote about as well as his own paintings"., and shows him graduating from a taste for G. F. Watts's "Love and Death" and Maurice Greiffenhagen's "The Idyll" to a love/hate for the modern, and the primitive. Both exhibitions are open until October 13; neither has the famously banned paintings of 1929, and thereby hangs a tale which is absurd enough to count as an unplanned bit of carnivalesque creativity, but isn't. The paintings themselves (represented here by photographs, page-pulls from the 1929 catalogue, and copies done for the dreadful movie *Priest of Love*) are lining the office of Mr Saki Karavas, proprietor of the La Fonda hotel in Taos, New Mexico, prisoners still of that fifty-five-year-old agreement between the Marlborough Street magistrates and Lawrence's agent, that they would never pollute these shores again. That agreement is still in force, so that even though the Home Secretary and the Customs and Excise had promised to make no move, one offended citizen could have started a battle that would have had to be fought all the way to the High Court. Add to which (here speaks the Keeper of Manuscripts at the university library, Alan Cameron) the fact that the paintings have been steadily losing moisture in the desert atmosphere all these years. They would anyway have needed extensive conservation work to put moisture back in, or they would have turned up as chaste, blank canvases. . . . So the offending images are on display, pubic hair and all, but the *bodies* of the paintings stay in the desert along with Lorenzo's ashes, dry, dry.

★ ★ ★

"The arts inspire a sense of identity. . . where there is no vision the people perish." The Arts Council's *Great British Success Story* (12pp. available from The Arts Council, 105 Piccadilly, £1.50, 0 7287 04749) repays close reading. For instance, which is the odd one out in this list – "music, dance, drama, mime, opera, the visual arts, crafts, photography, literature, film, video"? And what considerations produced a carefully exemplary configuration of novelists "like Salman Rushdie, Margaret Drabble, Buchi Emecheta and Martin Amis"? The bold new strategy (an "investment bid" for £161 million of public money in 1986/7 as against £106 million budgeted for 1985/6) is to argue that the arts are prestigious, cost-effective, and moreover keep people off the streets: "The arts can create new jobs cheaply and, notably, create them among young people in inner city areas. As well as improving the social fabric this can bring big savings in welfare payments." Labour's Shadow Arts Minister Norman Buchan must have inwardly raged to find his draft "Programme for the Arts", circulated in August, so glossily travestied. However he did have the satisfaction of hearing the new Arts Minister, Richard Luce, declare on the very same day, at an Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS) conference in Bishop's Stortford they both happened to be attending, that no extra cash would be forthcoming. Mr Buchan took advantage of the occasion to suggest that the Council has (still) got its sums wrong, and that the £35 million it wants to make up for GLC and Metropolitan Counties subsidies will leave it about £10 million short.

Whatever his accountancy qualifications, in terms of style Mr Buchan has the advantage. His draft Programme quoted Shelley on unacknowledged legislators, and wanted the arts to "fray at the nerve edge of our consciousness". At the *Success Story* launch Arts Council Secretary-General Luke Rittner said things like: "we will only continue to hold the interest of the public and of businesses if the quality of the arts product is maintained and we are able to meet the increasing demand." It's not the mere fact of market-forces talk that grates (frays at the nerve edge, even) so much as the obviousness and eagerness with which it's done: we're speaking your language, look, we have come through. However, there are occasional dark sayings. "Businesses sponsor the arts for solid returns", we're told, the arts "offer excellent opportunities for developing customer and client relations". Does this mean you can impress your customer by taking him to the opera? Do you swap silver coffee-pots? Or is it a veiled allusion to Edwardian-style intimacies in the green room?

D. H. Lawrence's "Boccaccio Story", which can be seen at the University of Texas, Austin, though not in the exhibition D. H. Lawrence and the Visual Arts *(reviewed below): it is, however, reproduced in the exhibition catalogue, which is available from the Castle Museum, Nottingham (24pp. £1.50).*

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Letters

Historiography of Colonial Africa

Sir, – Readers unfamiliar with the controversies in African historiography are likely to miss the depth of partisanship which invalidates most of Roland Oliver's points in his review of *Africa under Colonial Domination 1880–1935*, Volume VII of the Unesco *General History of Africa* (August 9); so they may well be persuaded to dismiss a pathbreaking work. Professor Oliver savages a book which emanates from a rival scholarly camp, which undermines his own political and ideological interests and does so without declaring his interest, in tones which leave the unsuspecting reader with the impression that he is objective.

He takes issue with the use of African initiatives and resistance to colonial domination as the theme of almost one-third of the chapters of the book; he does so on the grounds that "resistance to conquest was not the only, or even the most important, feature of the early colonial scene". That choice of theme, he asserts, combines with "selective amnesia" to produce grave distortions and omissions which, by making short shrift of the good works done by the colonizers and their African collaborators, mistreat the image of the conquerors. He also wonders whether, in the period covered by the book, there was anything which could be called the colonial economy – a subject to which four chapters are devoted. He laments that, in the book, African nationalist rhetoric has seeped into a tradition of historiography which, presumably, has hitherto been insulated from political intentions. And he takes swipes at the styles and historiographic credentials of some of the contributors to the volume. But do these charges stand up to examination?

Consider the matter of political rhetoric and bias which he raises in the first, and again in the last sentence of his review. African historiography has been bedevilled by accusations and counter-accusations of propaganda masquerading as history. The colonialist historiography to which the Unesco history is a reaction has long been notorious for its propagandistic aims. In keeping with colonialist ideology, it has insisted that the colonial enterprise was a civilizing mission; that Africans had no history; and that the only history of Africa was the history of what foreign invaders did in Africa. When Oliver writes of educated Africans "mediating civilization to their still benighted countrymen", one catches echoes of the rhetoric of imperialist propaganda, *à la* Kipling's "lesser breeds without the law" – a political disparagement which colonialist historiography has attempted to dress up as historical fact. Thus, even as he deprecates political rhetoric in historiography, he deploys that brand of it for which his school is well known.

When he complains, for example, that the works of colonial administrators are not given as much attention as he would like, I am tempted to remind him that the title of the volume is *Africa under Colonial Domination*, and not "The History of Colonial Rulers in Africa". One therefore expects to read about what Africans did and what was done to them under colonial rule; one cannot legitimately complain if the bulk of the work is devoted to African resistance, to the rise of African nationalist opposition to colonial domination, to the plight of Africans under the economic reorganization instituted by the colonizers, and to the consequences of colonial rule for African society, art, religion and demography. That only one chapter is overtly devoted to the methods and institutions of European domination is unsurprising; this is a history from the viewpoint of the vanquished. Those who think that only the victors should write history may object to this, but it ought to be clear that such an objection is partisan and political.

Oliver is probably at his worst when he attempts to deny the existence of the colonial economy. His argument fails on every score. That the economies of the colonies were administered to raise government revenue is no argument against their colonial character since they were complements subordinate to the economies of the European colonizing powers. The conditions for the viability of the colonial administrations were of course, as Oliver asserts, taxes. But what was the nature of the economic reorganization from which taxes were to be milked? Was it not a system of exports to Europe, and imports from Europe, organized by African outposts of companies controlled from Europe, outposts in whose employment Africans would earn money for taxes?

It is deliberately disingenuous to claim that the roads and railways in the colonies "were designed not in order that primary products could be evacuated cheaply to European markets, but in order that the inhabitants of the African colonies might have the wherewithal to pay taxes and so cover the costs of their own administration". Surely, if roads and railways were for the purpose that Oliver claims, one would expect a dense network reaching out to every administrative community that was taxed, and not spurs which invariably ran from the coast to mines and to areas where export crops were grown in the hinterland.

Oliver buttresses his claim that there was no colonial economy by asserting that "colonial governments were not greatly concerned to ensure that metropolitan trading companies or white settlers made maximum profits. They saw them as instruments for mobilizing African labour into tax-paying employment." In making that claim, he chooses to disregard clear statements by the promoters of the imperial adventure of their economic intentions, like that made by Lord Salisbury in 1895 about smoothing the path for British commerce, enterprise and capital by opening up the colonies – a statement which is quoted in *Africa under Colonial Domination 1880–1935*. Oliver further claims that colonial governments "were quite content that the job should be done and the profits made by Indians or Greeks or Lebanese". A leader's willingness for some of the job to be done and its profits made by camp followers in an expedition is no demonstration of his lack of interest in his own profits. Or does Oliver wish us to forget that UAC, De Beers, Union Minière and the other economic giants were interested in profits, indeed made huge profits, and were not owned by Indians or Levantines?

Oliver dismisses Wole Soyinka as unqualified to write the history of the arts in Africa during the period of colonial rule. One wonders if he can have read Soyinka's contribution, or if he merely wishes, by casting aspersions on Soyinka's credentials, to discredit his portrait of the combined assault by Christian and Islamic zealots on the traditional arts of Africa. One would have thought that the ultimate proof of qualification is the quality of the product. But, presumably, a man of letters who is also a professor of drama and a much-travelled observer and commentator on the visual and musical arts and aesthetics of Africa is not competent to write a history of his field, because he has not taken a degree in history. Presumably we should also disregard Winston Churchill on the Second World War and Trotsky on the Russian Revolution.

Oliver's review is the sort of attack which a jaded orthodoxy is liable to make on its supplanters as it is being pushed from the stage. Its quality, and the prejudices which it insists on perpetuating, demonstrate the great need for corrective works like the Unesco *History of Africa*, which has never concealed what it set out to do and why and how. Indeed the volume that Oliver reviews opens with a preface and a description of the project and its justification. By not indicating this to the reader, he contrives to indict a work for failing to be a history of the colonial enterprise in Africa – something it clearly set out not to be.

A comprehensive, magisterial history of Africa will not be possible until histories written from the various partisan interests become available. Until the principal sides in the events have had their say, a judicious and impartial summing up will not be possible. The Unesco project, by bringing out the African version of the African experience, is contributing to the foundations for the eventual writing of a comprehensive non-partisan history of Africa. For this reason alone, it deserves a fair hearing.

CHINWEIZU.
The Guardian, Lagos, Nigeria.

Literary Lapses

Sir, – Confusion over the sex of Black Beauty, pointed out by Peter Reading (Letters, September 6), is not the only error in the Fifth Edition of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Unsystematic sampling yields (among other instances) the statement that Hardy wrote seventeen novels (he wrote fifteen); that *Dombey and Son* was written "during a visit to Switzerland in 1846" (only the early chapters were written there, and the novel was not finished until March 1848); and that Housman's friend Moses Jackson "married and emigrated to India" in 1897 (crucially for *A Shropshire Lad*, published in 1896, Jackson emigrated in 1887 and married in 1889). Bryan Procter's name is given consistently as Brian Proctor, and his daughter inherits the misspelling of his surname. It is misleading to state that "most" of Mrs Gaskell's work "was first published" in Dickens's weekly magazines, since (for instance) *Ruth*, *Sylvia's Lovers*, *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* did not appear there.

Since a work of this kind inevitably stands or falls mainly by its reliability in matters of fact, these examples – to which other users of the volume can no doubt add their quota – suggest that a thorough revision of the work should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity. That at least some of the errors perpetuate those to be found in the fourth edition is little consolation to purchasers of the fifth.

NORMAN PAGE.
Department of English Studies, University of Nottingham, Nottingham.

'Smith and the Museum'

Sir, – Vincent Brome and D. P. Waley (Letters, August 23) have offered modifications to S. Schoenbaum's "Smith and the Museum" (August 9); I would like to offer another. Professor Schoenbaum says that the British Library has a Hinman Collator. More properly he should have said "had" a Hinman Collator. In 1983 the remains of one stood forlornly in the Gallery of the North Library; in 1985 it stands there no more. At just what point in its life the Hinman Collator ceased to function I do not know, but no scholar should appear in the North Library expecting to use it.

However, as Professor Schoenbaum should have said, the British Library owns a collating machine of its own devising which combines the features of the Hinman Collator and the Lindstrand Comparator. I used this machine extensively in 1983 and found it, though initially difficult to operate, satisfactory in the end. It also lacks any form of headrest. Scholars planning to do machine collating in the British Library should come prepared to learn how to use a device the like of which they have never encountered before and should also be prepared for possible damage to their foreheads.

WILLIAM PROCTOR WILLIAMS.
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'Breaking with Moscow'

Sir, – Peter Reddaway misrepresents my position in his review (August 30) of Arkady N. Shevchenko's book *Breaking with Moscow*. I did not express opinions, or "bizarre fulminations", about Shevchenko's actual clandestine career. I compared the assertions in his book to the historical record (and calendar) which is available to any other reviewer. In doing so, I found a number of fabrications and false statements for which there is no innocent explanation.

Consider, for example, the 1976 meeting Shevchenko claims he attended at the New York apartment of Soviet Deputy Minister, Boris Solomatin – a meeting attended by Americanist Georgi Arbatov and others – and which he describes in great detail. It is important because it is the culmination for Shevchenko of a year of spying (described in pp 3–43) for the FBI and CIA. The discussion itself, according to Shevchenko's verbatim account, concerned the US elections, the status of the Salt talks, and developments in Soviet–American relations. Immediately afterwards he claims to have reported what was said to his CIA case officer "Johnson", noting: "Soon after I described that evening to Johnson a new *rezident* came to New York to replace Boris Solomatin . . . Drozdov."

The problem, as I pointed out in my review, is that Drozdov replaced Solomatin on July 22, 1975 – nearly a year before Arbatov came to New York to assess the election. This means that this entire election conference with Solomatin, containing fulsome quotes about Ford and Reagan's chances, is anachronistic.

Since it was impossible that the meeting occurred in 1976, Shevchenko attempted to backdate this meeting to before Solomatin's departure after my review appeared. This revision, however, compounded rather than resolved the contradiction, because if the meeting had taken place in July 1975 – or before – Shevchenko could not have reported the meeting to the FBI and CIA ("Johnson"), as he claims, for the simple reason that he had not yet made contact with the FBI or CIA. Indeed, as Senator Moynihan's dating proves conclusively, Shevchenko was not a spy until six months after Solomatin left his post. This means that if the meeting took place when Solomatin was still at the UN, as Shevchenko now claims, then the entire spying context – including safe houses, and FBI and CIA case officers – cannot be true. This matter cannot be dismissed as an error in dating, as Reddaway misleadingly suggests. Neither date fits the facts. It is a fabrication.

In my review I similarly demonstrate that much of the rest of Shevchenko's putative espionage career, including the long list of items he claims to have given the CIA in 1975, is contradicted by the chronology of events.

If Shevchenko was willing to invent these parts of his espionage career, there is no reason to assume higher standards were used in other parts of the book. Nor can these errors be attributed to forgetfulness. Shevchenko, for example, includes in the book an invented vodka party at the home of Ernest Gross, a former State Department official – even though Gross had pointed out in a letter to Shevchenko and his lawyer as early as January 3, 1980, that he had not then even met Shevchenko. He, moreover, included his correspondence with Shevchenko to document this fact; none of which deterred the author from printing the false version.

Shevchenko's prior career had not been primarily concerned with truth. He admitted to the American Bar Association that while in Moscow he helped prepare fraudulent books and articles for what he termed the KGB "disinformation apparatus"; and, in congressional testimony, he admitted that, while part of his salary was being paid by a Soviet propaganda organization, he churned out over 200 articles under various names. In view of such a record, Reddaway's assessment of Shevchenko as "objective" seems somewhat naive.

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN.
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'The View from Inside'

Sir, – If a man writes that he was eaten by a wolf, a reasonably astute reviewer of the book would surely look for an explanation of the circumstances. But no such consideration seems to have occurred to Patrick McCarthy in his review (August 16) of *The View from Inside: A French Communist cell in crisis* by Jane Jenson and George Ross. McCarthy gives unqualified praise to this book despite its very troubling, fundamental ambiguity.

Jenson and Ross report that they regularly attended "cell" meetings during the period of their research. They also attended meetings of the executive committee of the section, ie, the next higher level of party organization. They attended meetings of the section's Women's Commission, and served as delegates from the "cell" to the conference of the section. They were assigned the task of contacting marginal members to draw these closer to the party. They delivered a report to the "cell" in preparation for the party's national congress. In short, they acted as fully fledged and leading members of a Paris party "cell", all the time maintaining, according to them, their status as independent objective observers.

Ordinary canons of social science fieldwork would require the authors of such a book to disclose to their readers just how, presumably being outsiders, they were able so fully to enter party life. But Jenson and Ross are strangely quiet here. They do not tell us whether it was necessary for them to obtain permission from the leadership to do this work, and, if so, from which level of the party's hierarchy. If it was necessary to obtain such authorization (and how could it have been otherwise?), what particular credentials were the authors able to produce? Were these credentials purely academic, or was there a political component? Were they required to make any commitments to the party before being allowed in? These are some of the troubling questions that remain unanswered.

It seems to me now that, in the absence of such information, the reader cannot interpret the very meaning of this book. For example, how will he know whether the French Communist Party is so open an organization that an outsider can walk in – more or less the way he might enter a Unitarian church in America – with no questions asked, be accepted as a leading comrade for as long as he wants and as intimately as he wants? Under this supposition there would hardly be a line between member and non-member and certainly no party secrets, at least not on the "cell" and section level.

Or, to entertain a hypothesis of conspiracy for a moment, a reader who is so minded may speculate that some dissident party leaders, say the group around Henri Fiszbin, conspired to introduce the authors to a friendly "cell" in the expectation that the resulting book would be to the political advantage of the dissident faction. (As McCarthy notes, the political opinions so strongly expressed by the authors, for example in their concluding section, correspond very closely to those of Fiszbin; cf Volume Four of Philippe Robrieux's *Historie intérieure du parti communiste*, pp 239–42.)

Of course, neither of these propositions need be valid, and I am not suggesting that they are. But it is a measure of the basic ambiguity of this rather strange book that both of these suppositions, on the face of the evidence presented, can suggest themselves to a reader.

WERNER COHN.
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Charles S. Peirce

Sir, – In labelling Charles S. Peirce an "anti-realist", Jonathan Cohen (August 23) neglects to mention the precise sense in which Peirce himself, from about 1869 until his death in 1914, regularly applied the opposite term to his philosophy. Indeed, of the several isms Peirce used to describe his work – pragmatism, pragmaticism, synechism, tychism, fallibilism, critical commonsensism – realism was the one that he used most consistently. By it he meant a neo-scholastic willingness to accord a degree of reality to universal conceptions ("reality belongs to what is present to us in true knowledge of any sort"). He opposed it to the view he called "nominalism", that "the absolutely external causes of perception are the only realities".

Peirce, who derived some of his meagre earnings from writing dictionary definitions of philosophical and logical topics, prided himself on the exactitude of his terminology.

In criticizing Peirce's semiotics for failing to stress the role of analogy, Cohen again ignores what Peirce himself had to say. Peirce gives considerable weight to analogical reasoning in, among other places, "A Theory of Probable Inference", in the one book he edited, *Studies in Logic by Members of the Johns Hopkins University* (1883), reprinted in 1983 by John Benjamins.

JOSIAH LEE AUSPITZ.
Sabre Foundation Inc, Room 3500, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York 10112.

'The Deadly Innocents'

Sir, – I think it should be pointed out that *The Deadly Innocents* by Muriel Gardiner, reviewed by Patricia Highsmith in your issue of September 6, was first published in this country by the Hogarth Press in 1977 (*TLS*, April 1, 1977). I am glad that Yale have reissued it, though they should have made its previous publishing history clear.

Muriel Gardiner was a remarkable person. She was one of the psychoanalysts involved with Freud's famous patient, the "Wolf-Man". She was responsible for aiding the escape of a number of Jews from Vienna after the *Anschluss*. She donated considerable sums of money to the Freud archives, and bought Freud's house in Maresfield Gardens so that it could be turned into a museum. She died quite recently in her eighties.

ANTHONY STORR.
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The Jewish National Library

Sir, – On July 19, Bernard Wasserstein wrote a splendid article about the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem: "Storing a national memory". In a special paragraph the author deals with the "tragic inheritance" of the destruction of the Jewish communities in Germany and in other parts of Europe. Here, I believe, the role of "Cultural Reconstruction" should be mentioned. It brought out of Germany half a million books, 40 per cent of which went to Palestine, and therefore to the National Library. The chairman of this organization was Salo Baron; the secretary, Hannah Arendt. The Cultural Reconstruction worked under the auspices of the War Department in Washington, DC.

MAX GRUENEWALD,
Leo Baeck Institute, 129 East 73rd Street, New York, New York 10021.

Prison Paintings by Michael Quanne, of which a short notice appeared on page 967 of the *TLS*, September 6, is published by John Murray (and not by Michael Joseph).

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COMMENTARY

Entertaining angels

Christopher Wintle

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN
Donnerstag aus Licht
Royal Opera House

Composers can make curious apologists for their own work. In a two-hour talk given the evening before this first English performance of *Donnerstag*, a slightly weary Karlheinz Stockhausen gave his by-now familiar demonstration of how the principal theme embodies in microcosm the organization of the entire piece, and by extension, that of the whole week of projected operas. For all the seriousness and significance of these explications (and it must be said, the themes are now more attractive and supple than has sometimes been the case), there is still something disingenuous about the confidence Stockhausen places in procedures which provide endless extensibility, without needing in the first instance to invoke much theatrical justification (as was not the case, for example, with Berg's schemes). Ironically, it was left to the two leading musician/performers to demonstrate Stockhausen's concomitant, and arguably more pertinent, sense of process and stage effect. In a charming passage from Act II, the trumpet, dazzlingly played by Markus Stockhausen, who retains even at the age of twenty-eight a touching adolescent gawkiness, and the basset-horn – seemingly a seductive extension of Suzanne Stephens's beguilingly long, dark hair – dallied coyly with each other's musical phrases, before converging harmoniously into a restrained, extended trill.

In the event, this dichotomy between the profoundly inert and the superficially dramatic characterized the aesthetic impact of *Donnerstag* as a whole, and was apparent right from the opening. Michael, a Christ-like "creator-angel", takes on human form "for one world-day", "in spite of Satan", and out of an "undying" love for mankind. His first appearance is accompanied both by a single, sustained ululating chord, and by an indistinct (pre-recorded) heavenly chorus chanting apocalyptic texts in German and Hebrew: these persist throughout the first act (which portrays his youth) enveloping him in a protective halo that frames and distances the action. However, since the chorus replaces the orchestra here in providing the main body of sound, the voices of the soloists are free to sing in a rapid, inventive, brittle (and often litanizing) declamation, without the usual instrumental support and harmonic inflections. This proves a mixed blessing. It undoubtedly lends fluency to the opening, as well as to the witty and original third scene, where Michael submits himself to an examination as singer, performer and dancer before an unusually appreciative jury, who wave, click, clap, hiss, blow kisses and talk on the telephone. Yet in the second scene, Michael's callow wooing of the eternally feminine, fantastic Moon-Eve, seems too slight to lend the concurrent narrations of the death of his mother in a mental hospital, and father in the army, the poignancy they deserve.

It is hardly surprising that the second act has the quality of chronicle and pageant more than of human drama, since Stockhausen himself sees the global travels of the mature Michael that form its substance as epitomizing the entire cycle – the seven countries visited correspond to the seven days of the week. Certainly, the brief, brash musical evocations of different national types in the chamber orchestra, under Peter Eötvös, make a refreshing, if noisy, textural contrast to the first act (in our age, Stockhausen can travel faster around the world than his musical forebears), even though their visual equivalents – Sumo wrestlers for Japan, Masai warriors for Africa and so forth – seem simplistic. The climax of the travels comes with Michael's renewed meeting with Moon-Eve. After their duet, they withdraw and are mocked first by a pair of clarinettists, and then, in their absence; are "nailed down", and hence crucified, by two overbearing brass players.

This off-stage, musically subliminated, death of Michael, has a curiously diminished impact (by comparison, for example, with that of Siegfried), explicable only by the greater importance attached to subsequent events. At the beginning of the next act, Michael is accorded a glorious homecoming welcome in his celestial abode (a cinematic sci-fi paradise), with the chorus and soloists' statuesque, splintered prosody piously celebrating the power of nature. This is revealed fully in three "light compositions" (imaginatively realized by Chris Ellis), in which various coloured lights pour through a large mobile disc. Indeed, for all the novelties of the staging, it is this third act which demonstrates the assurance of Stockhausen's control of large-scale operatic rhythm. The grand opening tableau is progressively, and very effectively, dispersed by the arrival of, successively, an incongruous old lady, a devil, and finally an angry Lucifer storming through the auditorium (Nicholas Isherwood was at his most impressive here). This prepares for the final spiritual enlightenment, the *Aufklärung*, in which the three solitary Michaels achieve an intimate, ritualistic, confessional repose.

If the large-scale shaping and the handling of the stage spectacle belong firmly to recognizable traditions, sometimes bordering on the banal, Stockhausen's vision, language and compositional experience (upon which he draws heavily here) seem equally far removed from operatic convention. There is, for example, almost no introspection among the protagonists, no real development of character, no involvement with the dramatic possibilities of narrative. The commitment to the performance by all those involved at Covent Garden is certainly impressive, and in itself makes for an enjoyable evening. But only time, and perhaps knowledge of the rest of the cycle, will teach us whether or not the spiritual invocations Stockhausen claims as the goal of his project may be achieved fully in the opera house in quite this way.

Genuine genres

David Nokes

TOM STOPPARD
The Real Inspector Hound
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
The Critic
Olivier Theatre

Theatrical double-bills usually offer contrasts. Olivier's memorable audacity in coupling *The Critic* with *Oedipus Rex* was based on sound culinary principles, mingling the sweet with the sour. The present pairing at the Olivier Theatre runs the risk of cloying our palates with a double helping of pudding, and it says much for the skill of these productions that the evening does not result in indigestion. It would be hard to find two other plays in the repertoire presenting as many conspicuous parallels as these. Both take a narcissistic delight in parodying the clichés of coarse acting and the drama critic's commonplace book. Both display a fascination – disguised as contempt – for green-room gossip and backstage tantrums.

In technical ways the co-producers, Stoppard himself and Sheila Hancock, seem determined to reinforce a sense of *déjà vu*. To send up a discovery scene and a dumb-show routine once, as Stoppard does, may be called parody; to send them up again, in *The Critic*, takes satire into the realms of surrealism. Props and stage effects too have a curious antiphony. The hoover in *The Real Inspector Hound* is echoed by the cannon in *The Critic*; a wheel-chair is replaced by a hobby-horse. Above all, in both plays we have a pair of critics, one short and fat (Roy Kinnear), the other tall and thin (Edward Petherbridge/Jonathan Hyde), offering a running commentary on the action. These two critics are both part of, and yet separate from, the fantasy world of the imagination. Their allusive, ironic commentary is presented as another form of comic ritual, another fiction.

With so many parallels of theme and technique, the main difference between the two productions is one of tone, and the evening exposes the fragility of Stoppard's talent when compared with one of the established classics of the genre. The problem is one of confinement. Stoppard's set – *Cluedo* rather than *The Mousetrap* – like Stoppard's language, relies upon a constrictive pattern of echoes and allusions. Its movement enacts the last squeeze of a dying cliché, like a last sour twist of lemon, producing an effect of frigid precision. This mannered technical pastiche allows little room for the kind of comic ad lib and stage business that give such animation and vitality to Sheridan's comedy. Curiously, *The Real Inspector Hound*, a favourite with amateur dramatic societies, has become almost as fossilized as the genre which it aims to parody. *The Critic* has the bubbling excitement of an Irish fair.

Ian McKellen's Hound is pitched unevenly between the chaos of Clouseau and the menace of Truscott, but his Puff is a masterpiece of comic invention. It was an excellent idea to turn Puff into an Irish wit, full of the blarney, capering about the stage like a madcap na Gopaleen. Roy Kinnear, though, is clearly more of a Birdboot than a Dangle and turns the parterres of Sheridan's repartee into a histrionic Eiger. Sheila Hancock risks overloading *The Critic* with stage gags, but her treatment of the final tableau produces an appropriate satiric climax. Teasing the audience into a mood of patriotic complacency with a medley of *Rule Britannia*, *Hearts of Oak*, etc, like the Last Night of the Proms, she suddenly brings the whole imperialist edifice crashing down. Model ships of the Spanish Armada, evidently intended to hint at the Argentine Navy, are shot down by a kind of antique Space Invaders machine, and Britannia is left dangling over the carnage. It seems only fitting to give the final word to Birdboot: "first class family entertainment, but if it goes on beyond half past ten it's self-indulgent – pass it on".

Stagier secrets

Peter Kemp

OSCAR WILDE
Lady Windermere's Fan
BBC2

Lady Windermere's Fan on BBC2 is introduced by one of the cast, who stresses the importance of being earnest about it. Often seen as glittering and shallow, the play, it's explained, has "darker undercurrents", welling from Oscar Wilde's homosexual apprehensions.

In keeping with this insight, the director, Tony Smith, opens the flood-gates of seriousness in his production, hitting Wilde's flimsy piece with a tidal wave of weightiness that reduces it to wreckage. To establish *Lady Windermere's Fan* as something deeper than the sentimental melodrama-cum-comedy of manners it is usually taken as, Smith operates a policy of cutting the bad lines and muffling the *bons mots*. On the one hand, his version lops away the stagier exclamations and explanations ("I dare not tell her who this woman really is. The shame would kill her", etc); on the other, it throws away Wilde's epigrams in hurried asides or swathes them in solemnity. While it is a relief to be spared the over-sprightly, on-your-toes bouts of verbal ping-pong Wilde productions often opt for, this approach soon becomes painfully heavy-footed.

Where Lady Windermere – whose angular candour and slightly callow ardour are caught with appropriate stiffness by Helena Little – should seem the rigorous exception in her world, here she is surrounded by sourpusses. Even a figure of blatant farce like the Duchess of Berwick – whose dialogue ("No nice girl should ever waltz with such particularly younger sons") seems a trial run for Lady Bracknell's – is metamorphosed in Sara Kestelman's furrowed performance into a rather baleful creature. In keeping with the production's penchant for getting things out of proportion, the screen fills – as she talks of Lord Windermere and Mrs Erlynne – with a giant close-up of her opening and closing mouth. Somewhat obviously conveying the enormity of her communication to Lady Windermere, this technique is later matched by other eccentric visual tricks. To indicate that the heroine is disorientated by what she's heard of her husband, for instance, the camera keels over, tilting her world so that we're made aware that she is seeing things from a sickening new angle.

The greatest casualty in this no-laughing-matter rendering of the play is Lord Darlington, the coat-hanger for Wilde's most carefully tailored epigrams. Taking this character's bantering observation that "Nowadays to be intelligible is to be found out" rather literally, Kenneth Cranham strives hard for a incomprehensibility by mumblings, gabblings, and tight-lipped indistinctness. Listless and lustreless to begin with, his performance erupts into hissing melodrama when – trysting on the terrace with a distraught Lady Windermere – he succumbs to snaky villainy, writhing round her with beady eyes and much histrionic sibilance.

At this point, it's as though, acknowledging the impossibility of playing the drama as something genuinely impassioned, Cranham surrenders to the fact that its plot is a creaking farrago of the hackneyed. Hovering protectively round the child shame stops her from disclosing herself to, Mrs Erlynne, for instance, is close to *East Lynne* in more than name – something which textual pruning and a low-key performance from Stephanie Turner cannot hide.

It is true that there are darting hints of the dramatist's own scandalous secret in *Lady Windermere's Fan* – talk of a husband, whose marital passion is "false", using his wife as "a mask", "a cloak", "a blind" for his disreputable "bought" amours. The play juggles stagily with the idea of exposure, playing a part, and being on the verge of social ruin. And though sexual inversion can't be mentioned, Wilde signals his unorthodoxy by inverting usual sentiments in the epigrams he flaunts. One of these – "life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it" – indicates how out of sympathy he would have been with this dour handling of *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

COMMENTARY

Spatial excitements, historical themes

John Dixon Hunt

A Tercentenary Tribute to William Kent
Ferens Art Gallery, Kingston Upon Hull, until October 27

William Kent – "architect, furniture & interior designer, painter & book illustrator" – was born in Bridlington in 1685 and probably apprenticed to a coach painter in Hull before leaving for London and eventually Italy, where he stayed for ten years and effectively determined the forms, styles and patronage of his subsequent career. Aptly, then, this tercentenary tribute is first to be seen in Hull – the joint responsibility of the University's History of Art Department and the city's Ferens Art Gallery. It is a fairly low-key affair: it gives pride of place to his landscape designs, largely the consequence of the organizers' decision to focus upon Kent's drawings. There are a few portraits, some engravings, some blown-up colour photographs (including a depressingly dull one of the Vale of Venus at Rousham), but the bulk of the show consists of Kent's own designs. For many visitors this will be a welcome opportunity to see items hitherto available only in albums at Chatsworth or Holkham and, with some exceptions, rarely illustrated in specialist literature.

The contributors to the catalogue (which is computer-typed, with no illustrations and quite a few, largely typographical, errors) are Harold Barkley, Geoffrey Beard, Madeline Edmead, Terry Friedman, Cinzia Sicca and John Wilton-Ely. Their brief but generally useful essays set out details of Kent's early life, his furniture, sculpture, book illustrations, and his architectural education and taste (a useful section, this, by Cinzia Sicca who emphasizes Kent's "personal architectural language", its debts above all to Giulio Romano, and rescues his elaborate and energetic work from under the shadow of his major patron, Lord Burlington).

The interactions of Kent's career, a crucial if tricky subject, are not much illuminated by these essays nor by the exhibition itself. But then neither Margeret Jourdain's pioneering study of 1948 nor Michael Wilson's book last year (reviewed by Howard Colvin in the *TLS* of August 31, 1984) did much more than treat his various activities one by one. Yet it would be useful to know how his career as a (rather unpromising) history painter affected his landscape designs: those for both the Chatsworth hillside and for Rousham – his *chef-d'oeuvre* as a landscapist – imply historical themes. Were there continuities between his theatre designs and book illustrations, and between both of these and his garden work? (To talk as the catalogue does of his "histrionic furniture" in such a context is to beg all the questions.) His sculptural work celebrated worthies like Palladio, Newton, Shakespeare (Kent's most famous work, in Westminster Abbey), so were the "philosophical and ethical statements" in Stowe's Elysian Fields and at Chiswick Kent's own responsibility rather than his patrons'?

Though there are examples of designs for sculpture, the Royal Barge, ceiling paintings (two preparatory drawings for the Flemish church in Rome and for Kensington Palace) and other interiors, and a few drawings for *The Faerie Queene* (but what a pity none of the books he illustrated is displayed), pride of place goes to his landscape drawings. The preface to the catalogue says these are "arguably the field of his greatest contribution to the visual arts". It is, then, somewhat disappointing that this case is not argued. The non-specialist visitor, indeed, delighted by these drawings' humour, lightness of touch and feel for spatial excitements as well as by their frequent homage to classical and modern Italy, may be left wondering what Kent's role in English garden history actually was. The catalogue pursues its own scholarly paths, no doubt legitimately, and promises further materials in a series of as yet unpublished articles, but it does rather neglect the task of informing the less initiated.

Kent emerges as a lively, talented polymath, whose place in eighteenth-century arts has yet to be fully assessed and appreciated. Perhaps this admirable, small exhibition will pave the way for the kind of show Kent really deserves – huge, flamboyant, filled with examples of his furniture, the books he illustrated, maybe even the Royal Barge, and ideally mounted under one of his ceilings at the Royal Academy or Kensington Palace.

A Tercentenary Tribute to William Kent will be at Nottingham University Gallery from November 21 to December 20.

A drawing by William Kent, "The Shell Temple and View through the Grotto in Pope's Garden, Twickenham", c1725–30, from the exhibition reviewed here.

Plain and progressive

Eric Korn

Fifty Penguin Years
Royal Festival Hall, until October 27
The Art of the Paperback
The Clarendon Gallery, until October 14

Do you remember *Interglossa*? The name, like Adlestrop, stood out on countless afternoons in bookshops of the 1940s, 1950s, well into the 1960s. *Interglossa* was a Pelican Special by the mathematician and popularizer Lancelot Hogben, an impeccably designed and wildly unrealistic draft of an International Auxiliary Language for the imminent age of science, peace and progress, rooted in Latin and Greek and illustrated by little red schematic Isotype figures (*phu erythro anthropi*) like Bauhaus toy soldiers, seated on the roofs of little black Isotype houses (*supra melano domi*). It was in all respects but one the quintessence of Penguinism: classically based but forward-looking, elegant, accessible, well-meaning. But Penguin over-estimated the market for elegant, forward-looking linguistic exercises, and of the initial six-figure print run, I dare say 90,000 stayed on the shelves for decades, may even now be bunkered somewhere. "*Interglossa*", grieved an executive, "that should be a main exhibit for Penguin Follies. In a glass case."

There is no glass case of Penguin Follies at the *Fifty Penguin Years* exhibition but it is a bright and honest show, not averse to admitting reverses, blunders and embarrassments (the Penguin Special, *V.D. in Britain*, carried the advertising slogan "coughs and sneezes spread diseases: catch the germs in your handkerchief", but this may have been a deliberate attempt to mislead); willing to acknowledge its precursors (the Albatross imprint of Leipzig, with Hans Marderstaig's typography, is prominently displayed as a model for the first Penguins: more tellingly, they admit that the rival Picador led the way to the new "B" format). The catalogue, *50 Penguin Years* by Linda Lloyd Jones, with an extended essay on design by Jeremy Ansley (142pp. Penguin. £4.95, 0 14 008589 0), which is as good as a company history can well, be, is even franker.

The Festival Hall foyer is a congenial atmosphere for Penguins. Incipient nostalgia for Ken Livingstone's GLC blends so fittingly with nostalgia for those fledgeling birds, plain, progressive and non-pictorial, that it is a struggle to remind oneself that this is a promotion and not a retrospective. What did Penguins have that Jarrold's Jackdaws, Methuen's Martins and Benn's Sixpennies lacked? Simply, the most compelling brand image imaginable. The tripartite design, the flag of some well-governed republic, orange-white-orange, was distinctive, immensely versatile; it could be stood on end (as in Penguin Music Magazine), subdivided to provide space for more text (as in Penguin Specials), reduced to a couple of harmoniously placed horizontal rules as in Science News or simply adumbrated by the proportions of the design. The display of Penguin forerunners, including Woolworth's sixpenny Readers' Library, perhaps the most horrible books ever printed, with migrainous type on grey sacking, in purple boards that broke away within minutes, shows just what a good deal the public was then offered: a pocket book that could go into the pocket and come out again without being reduced to a pulpy mass of leaves.

The exhibition carries Penguin history through its glorious first decade, taking only partial credit for winning the war for the United Nations and the 1945 election for Labour, through the proliferation of the 1950s, the new look of the 1960s, through the tough times of the 1970s and the restoration of profitability with Fonda, F-Plans and *Far Pavilions*. At the Clarendon Gallery in Vigo Street there is a show of recent Penguin cover artists; at their best, I noted without surprise, in evoking the styles of earlier decades by pastiche or parody. Paul Hogarth and the versatile Lawrence Mynott are noteworthy, and there is a collection of the Allen Lane Christmas Books, fine editions for a select company of two thousand close friends. So Penguins and Puffins and Ptarmigans head into their second half century, with a Pen-Gwyn History of Wales in Welsh imminent and who knows what else: pertelotes for femlit, plovers for lovers, petrels for agitprop, peewits for the ESN, pterodactyls for historical fiction, passenger pigeons for lost causes, popinjays for vanity publishing, parrots as speaking books . . . And I haven't mentioned *Lady Chatterley*.

Marks of ownership

H. R. Woudhuysen

Camites Latentes
St George's Gallery 1/2 St George's Street, London W1.

To coincide with the Colloque of the Comité International de Paléographie in London this month Sotheby's have mounted an outstanding exhibition of illuminated manuscripts at the St George's Gallery. The exhibits come from what is probably the largest and finest private collection of medieval manuscripts in existence, the Comites Latentes, or "Hidden Friends". The collection, which takes its name from Petrarch's phrase for the books in his library, has been built up over the last twenty years by an unnamed connoisseur and is normally kept in the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire in Geneva.

Almost all of the manuscripts were written and illuminated in France or Italy – there is only one example of English book production, a late twelfth-century verse translation of the Bible into French – but most have at one time or another passed through English hands. The catalogue by Christopher de Hamel, the exhibition's organizer, pays particular attention to the great English collectors, with valuable illustrations of their marks of ownership, and interesting details of their peculiar foibles. Sir Thomas Phillipps, for example, had a pathological hatred of cheese, Roman Catholics and central heating; Richard Bennett would not own a book if it was more than thirteen inches high; portraits of the collectors and copies of their sale catalogues are among the items on display. In addition to books once owned by such famous bibliophiles as the sixth Duke of Devonshire, William Morris and J. R. Abbey, there are items from the less well-known libraries of the Rothschilds, H. A. Brölemann, Manuel Johnson, and John Boykett Jarman whose restoration work on his manuscripts after they were damaged in a flood bordered on forgery. The catalogue, which is brief but informative and reasonably priced at £5, makes a valuable contribution to the history of book collecting.

The provenances of the manuscripts guarantee their quality. Many, like the French Book of Hours which Jean Fouquet may have worked on, or the outstanding early thirteenth-century Missal of the Abbey of St Stephen, Dijon, or the beautiful Birago Hours, are known to scholars already. But there are some new discoveries described here, including an unrecorded Book of Hours probably written and decorated for Lorenzo de' Medici, and the attribution by Albinia de la Mare of the script of another fine Book of Hours to the pen of Antonio Sinibaldi whose work is represented elsewhere in this remarkable exhibition. A full-scale catalogue of the collection by Charlotte Lacaze is in preparation.

The Library of Trinity College, Dublin, has just announced that an agreement has been reached with British Rail Pension Funds for the loan of a seventh-century manuscript fragment of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, possibly the oldest surviving manuscript written in Britain. The manuscript, which was recently bought at auction, is now on display in the College Library.

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JOHN CLELAND
Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure
Edited by Peter Sabor
204pp. Oxford University Press. £1.95.
0 19 281634 9
Fanny Hill: Or memoirs of a woman of pleasure
Edited by Peter Wagner
243pp. Penguin. £2.95.
0 14 043249 3

John Cleland bids fair to become the Vivaldi of eighteenth-century literature, his cult promoted by people who often don't much care for the period as a whole, and who cheerfully ignore the work of its greatest masters. Roger Lonsdale's discovery in 1979 of several new items for the canon made it possible to credit the novelist with a "sustained and serious statement about the nature of fiction", and at this rate we shall soon need a scholarly *ABC* (Annual Bibliography of Clelandiana). There is something ominous about the joint appearance of these two editions: they have solid textual bases, bibliographical aids, explanatory notes (very good in both cases, but especially Peter Sabor's deft verbal glosses), and of course a clever and altogether unconvincing introduction.

Both Sabor and Wagner go through the accustomed hoops. Each traces the publishing history with the aid of David Foxon's classic account. Each looks back at the context of whore biographies descending from Nicolas Chorier and *L'École des filles*, ground covered by Cleland's biographer William H. Epstein among others. Both pick up Leo Braudy's comparison of Fanny's mechanical operations of the body with La Mettrie's *L'Homme machine*. One of their few disagreements concerns the findings of Steven Marcus: for Wagner, "we are into . . . 'pornotopia' . . . the only aim being sexual pleasure", whereas for Sabor "Cleland's world is assuredly not the 'pornotopia' that Stephen [*sic*] Marcus defines". Here I am with Wagner, but most of the way he is the less cogent or the two, and the difference is crucial when we reach Cleland's relation to the early masters of English fiction.

Both commentators see *Fanny Hill* as a critique of recent fiction, even to the point of agreeing on the fact that Fanny's "Vartue" is a thrust at Richardson via *Shamela* – maybe, but it was ordinary pronunciation, and Cleland may just be mimicking vulgar or provincial speech. Sabor believes that "Fanny's physical resemblance to Pamela is not gratuitous [an unsurprising coincidence, more likely?]; she is a Richardsonian creation, modified by the wit and good humour of Fielding. Drawing on the strengths and parodying the weaknesses of the two great mid-eighteenth-century novelists, [the *Memoirs*] deserves a permanent place not only in libertine literature but in the canon of the English novel." The work would earn this by literary merit or artistic power, but all that Wagner in particular can manage is singing a song of social significance:

> *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is a novel dominated by eighteenth-century bourgeois thought, with a sprinkling of French libertinism . . . . The need to succeed financially is continually stressed, and like a good pupil Fanny reproduces what she has learnt on her social climb, thus perpetuating clichés of middle-class origin . . . . Like Richardson, Defoe was a bigot at heart, if not an incipient pornographer . . . . The ruling class created a licentious literature dominated by urbane, unpretentious wit. In England, the rise of the novel was accompanied by the growth and influence of a middle-class readership.

A case conducted in these terms naturally reaches the complacent certainty that "until the early 1960s, scholars of literature found the sexual aspects of the *Memoirs* distasteful and decided that ignoring the history of licentious fiction and eighteenth-century pornography was preferable to having to deal with the uncomfortable, if significant, problem of human sexuality as portrayed in literature". Possibly: but there is an alternative explanation.

The most significant problem raised by Cleland's canonization is the literary value of parody (if it *is* there), when the parodist is a limited, inexpert and reiterative writer and the object a novelist of deep mythic and poetic resonance. (The noise of the sexual ostinato in *Fanny Hill* sounds not unlike endless slabs of Philip Glass.) Can the external chisel of parody do more than scratch the surface of Richardson's books, with their inner apprehension of a sexuality that extends beyond mechanical coupling, and of a female nature not limited to whoops of delight over the male member? Good scholars that they are, the editors locate Cleland in a world inhabited by Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. But Sterne, for that matter, was the son of a soldier whose regiment was broken at the time of the Peace of Utrecht: so was Cleland. There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth.

Promiscuous pluralism

Chris Baldick

CLIVE LEATHERDALE
Dracula: The Novel and the Legend: A study of Bram Stoker's Gothic masterpiece
256pp. Aquarian Press. £6.95.
0 85030 383 4

Bram Stoker's mother was certainly impressed by *Dracula*: "It is splendid, a thousand miles beyond anything you have written before, and I feel certain will place you very high in the writers of the day . . . . No book since Mrs Shelley's *Frankenstein* or indeed any other at all has come near yours in originality, or terror – Poe is nowhere." She has not been alone in confusing a high quality of writing with that kind of originality in which a creepy story unwittingly finds itself becoming an enduring modern myth. This borderland occupied by *Frankenstein*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Dracula* remains a confusing area for the exercise of critical judgment. Clive Leatherdale's contention that *Dracula* is "in cultural terms . . . a major work of fiction" does not solve the problem, but some help may be found in his survey of the wide range of meanings generated by Stoker's novel.

Dracula has been read as a Grail quest, a projection of infantile castration fantasies, and even as a prophecy of East European subversion of Western democracy (the US Army used to issue free copies to its troops). More recently, Franco Moretti's Marxist reading in his *Signs Taken for Wonders* has unearthed fears of monopolistic inroads into the free market. And the novel teems with strange fusions of religious and sexual imagery so endlessly suggestive as to make *Dracula*, for liberal and deconstructive critics, a dream come true in its promiscuous pluralism of meanings.

To be spoiled for choice is less exciting than it sounds, though, when the different readings available are merely laid out in a row as on a supermarket shelf. Dr Leatherdale acts very much as the retailer of the interpretations of others, hardly trying to synthesize or develop them: Moretti's association of blood with capital, for instance, is reported but not followed through to the text, where the stabbing of Dracula in London sheds banknotes instead of blood, and where working-class characters extort beer-money from their superiors so often as to be scolded for their "unnatural thirst". Leatherdale is thorough in picking up the novel's many sexual symbols and echoes, but attempts no coherent diagnosis. It should be possible to plot the sexual fears and fantasies in *Dracula* around the central contrast between the dangerously nubile Lucy and the saintly Mina, and around the threat of Lucy's polyandry, neutralized in her multiple blood-transfusions and finally exorcized when she is passionately staked by her fiancé.

The earlier chapters of this book are admirably clear and helpful on the distinctions between the historical Wallachian prince Vlad the Impaler and the literary Transylvanian Count, as well as on Stoker's life and work, and on the bewildering variety in European folklore both of vampires (the German *nachzehrer* clutched its thumbs, while the Bavarian version had only one nostril) and of remedies: in Wallachia the lard of a pig killed on St Ignatius's Day had to be rubbed on one's body.

Disappointing as it is in its interpretative agnosticism, Dr Leatherdale's book still offers plenty to interest the student of *Dracula*. His English prose, though, is often as creaky as a castle door, and his grasp of dates is uncertain. During the decade in which *Dracula* was written, English social and moral decadence was probably at its peak. Matthew Arnold observed that those years were "wandering between two worlds; one dead, the other powerless to be born".

To be allowed an insight into the opinions of Matthew Arnold (*d* 1888) on the mores of the 1890s is a rare privilege, disturbing as its implications may be for the good townsfolk of Cobham, near Arnold's burial-place. They may have to sharpen a few stakes.

Vastly available

John Mullan

SAMUEL RICHARDSON
Clarissa or The History of a Young Lady
Edited by Angus Ross
1,534pp. Penguin. £9.95.
0 14 043215 9

Angus Ross has produced an accurate and affordable edition of the most imitated and revered novel of the eighteenth century. At last. This is the first time the novel has been in paperback (here in one gigantic volume; also available in hardback, Viking, £19.95, 0 670 80829 6). What is remarkable is that such an edition has not been available before.

Ross provides much useful information in his introduction and notes, particularly when he summarizes the history of the various editions of *Clarissa*. It is a pity that he does not provide any introductory account of the novel's reception – of its extraordinary prestige (as well as popularity) in the eighteenth century. Literary criticism's lack of interest in this cultural history of the text has led to its being undervalued. Q. D. Leavis declared that "Richardson's interest" was "almost entirely historical", and her pejorative emphasis on the word "historical" has been all too influential, the extreme case of a prejudice which has pushed *Clarissa* to the margins of a literary canon. Ross points to some of the literary-critical arguments for the novel's status as "an indispensable document in the history of English (and indeed European) fiction in the eighteenth century". These arguments seem but what perhaps matters more is simply that the text's availability might help it to be prised from the grasp of any narrowly literary interest.

Of course, there have been more obvious impediments to the production of this edition of *Clarissa*. Richardson was an obsessive editor of his own work, and altered the novel considerably between its first and third editions. He attempted to produce an ultimately authoritative text, immune to misinterpretation. As his project was impossible, so is that of any modern editor who would look for the reliable version of the text. Ross explains this, while sensibly using the first edition of 1747–8. It has never before been republished; its appearance now is worth any number of critical texts.

Selections from the diary of the Reverend James Woodforde (1740–1803), first published in five volumes between 1924 and 1931, are contained in *A Country Parson: James Woodforde's Diary 1759–1802* (223pp. Century. £12.95. 0 7126 0730 7), with introductory material by John Julius Norwich and Ronald Blythe, and illustrations by Rosalind Caldecott and contemporary artists. Lord Norwich remarks that Woodforde is "as a diarist, unlike any other I know. He has none of the driving ambition of Pepys . . . . Woodforde builds up his picture very slowly and entirely without artifice – for the simple reason that he has no idea that he is building it up at all." Woodforde's style is laconic: "went home with Betsy White and had some talk with her concerning my taking her mine when an opportunity offered and she was not averse to it at all."

Paperback reprints: the anatomy of literary survival

Nigel Cross

While much that is in print is not literature, all literature is in print. This is the assumption behind most teaching and research in English literature. The "great tradition" has been firmly established in schools and colleges, aided by the availability of cheap texts from Penguin, Oxford and Dent, and in America from Signet, Bantam and Dover. But, ninety-nine per cent of these familiar "classics" have had an uninterrupted printing history from the day of the first edition. And the syllabus usually consigns the losers, the millions of out-of-print or only recently reprinted books, to oblivion, where most of them are thought to belong.

Literary survival, then, amounts to rather more than the critical selection of the fittest. It is, above all, a publishing process involving advisers and editors, reviewers and readers, promotion and marketing, and – sooner or later – reprinting. If a book misses out at the reprint stage, through bad luck or a bad publisher, it dies. And even reprinting may not keep it alive. Yet in Britain since the late 1970s, there has been a great deal of rummaging through the literary cemetery. The chief resurrector of dead literature has been the feminist publishing house Virago. Now other paperback imprints, among them Oxford, Penguin, Hogarth Press and Methuen are increasingly joining in.

Their main area of interest is fiction (most non-fiction reprints cater for specialist markets); the kind of fiction that can claim to be a "minor classic" or a "neglected masterpiece". This categorization says very little about the book except that it has been out of print for a while. Forty years ago the publishers Eyre and Spottiswoode, whose editorial director was Graham Greene, decided to reissue a series of "minor" and "partly forgotten" twentieth-century novels. The attempt failed, perhaps because the selected novels were too stale, lacking even in nostalgia, for such a speedy resurrection. Orwell had chosen to edit Leonard Merrick's *The Position of Peggy Harper* (1911) for the series. When it failed to appear he wrote an essay in *Tribune* on the whole subject of reprinted fiction, "The Good Bad Book" (November 2, 1945). He suggested that many good novels are forgotten because their authors surround them with indifferent work. As well as Merrick, he singled out J. D. Beresford's *A Candidate for Truth*, W. L. George's *Caliban*, May Sinclair's *The Combined Maze*, Barry Pain's *The Octave of Claudius* and Ernest Raymond's *We The Accused*. Forty years on, only Raymond's novel is in print, helped along by a television serial.

If the first stage in the decay of a literary reputation is to fall out of print, the second, and usually terminal, stage is to disappear from the standard reference books. Of Orwell's *Tribune* list, Merrick, Beresford and George vanished long ago. Pain has managed a line or two as a cockney writer, but was dropped from Margaret Drabble's *Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Only May Sinclair has staged a small recovery. Her entry in the *Companion* reads "Her novels . . . were largely forgotten until their revival (by Virago) in the 1980s".

The fate of Merrick and Beresford demonstrates that a normal prerequisite for an author's survival in print is not only quality but quantity. It is useless, from posterity's point of view, to be the author of nineteen passable novels and only one good one. If the good novel seems to be a fluke, it will go the way of the rest. The same holds true for the writer of only one or two good books and no bad ones. In all the leading British paperback series, for example, there are only two nineteenth-century novels, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by one-novel authors, and these are clearly special cases. Librarians are only too familiar with readers who ask for another title by the same author – it is part of the conservatism of the reading public.

Why did May Sinclair's good bad books succeed where Beresford's have failed? Part of the answer must be that Virago have made a genre out of gender, and Beresford is of the wrong gender. Genre reprints, most notably of detective fiction, have always been able to overcome the reader's preference for the novelist over the novel. For Virago, the identification of a new genre – novels about women's experience as well as novels by women writers – together with a memorable "brand image" (green spines, full colour portraits) has rescued, at least for the time being, many good bad books and minor classics.

Virago's editorial selection procedure is instructive. By 1986, they will have published some 250 titles (they began in 1978), the majority of them previously out of print. There is a pleasing fiction that readers send in nominations, votes are counted and participatory democracy triumphs. Virago indeed keeps a ledger of nominated books, but some nominators are more influential than others. The most influential of all has been Elaine Showalter – it sometimes seems that Virago are quietly working their way through the bibliography of Professor Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*. This is a rare instance of a creative partnership between academic study and publishing enterprise. It also illustrates the difference between reprinting nineteenth and twentieth-century fiction. Modern fiction does not need an academic to disinter it. Virago's current fiction editor is Alexandra Pringle. She recalls that her literary tastes were influenced by her mother, who gave her the novels of her own generation to read – works by Rosamond Lehmann and E.M. Delafield. It seems that such personal recommendations run from mother to daughter, but rarely survive into three generations. The more distant the publication date, the more the publisher has to rely on academic suggestions; there are no survivors to recall the thrill of reading Mrs Oliphant or Rhoda Broughton on their first publication. But whether the discovery comes by personal recommendation or as the result of scanning the fiction shelves of the London Library – well-stocked in out-of-print novels – the process is inevitably rather haphazard.

Like Everyman, World's Classics and Penguin before them, Virago have become able to reclaim novels on the strength of their imprint: some libraries will now buy almost every new Virago title as a matter of course. Potential readers must develop a brand loyalty; only then does the reprint they haven't heard of stand a commercial chance. Attractive presentation also seems essential if this brand-loyalty, at bottom the reader's trust in editorial judgment, is to be sustained. It doesn't always work. One Penguin editor was unsuccessful in his expensive attempt to push his enthusiasm for R.C. Hutchinson into print (Zenith are now having another go).

There have, of course, been many reprint publishers, from Edward Lloyd in the early Victorian period, who gave old novels a new title on a new title page, and the reprint king of the mid-century, H.G. Bohn, through the earnest Everyman, Cape's Traveller's Library and the aptly titled Phoenix Library of Chatto and Windus, to John Hayward's Cresset Press and Eyre and Spottiswoode's Century Novelists. Such series have usually proved profitable publishing ventures – but they have generally failed to drag out-of-print books back into the literary mainstream. They do well with out-of-copyright "classics", partly because they offer competing editions which attract school and library buyers (1991 will be a boom year, when Virginia Woolf and James Joyce come out of copyright), but their personal choices fail, as a rule, to survive the first showing.

But there are exceptions. The most dramatic instance of a rescued author is George Gissing. It used to be thought that *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* was a minor classic, and would therefore drop out of print from time to time; everything else was considered unreprintable. However, since the 1970s, Gissing's novels with their modish emphasis on sex, class and money, seen from the point of view of those deprived of all three, have had a sustained printing history. From hardback (Harvester) to paperback (Dover, Penguin, Dent), they are now about to be published by the Hogarth Press in a collected paperback edition. Even when Gissing's novels become less fashionable again, the fact that he now has more titles in print than in his own lifetime suggests that he has earned some kind of permanence. But Gissing's publishing history, as befits the author of *New Grub Street*, is extraordinary. It seems unlikely that it can be repeated for many other "neglected" writers. Hogarth's fiction editor, Jenny Uglow, is attempting to pull off a similar feat for the novels of Mark Rutherford. If Rutherford is to enjoy a permanent revival, other paperback publishers will have to show an interest.

One of the most experienced of British reprint editors is Will Sulkin, formerly with Penguin, and now running Oxford's paperback list. He makes a distinction between "minor masterpieces" (Borrow and Mary Russell Mitford) which will cost the reader more, and the better established titles which go into the cheaper World's Classics series, complete with scholarly apparatus for the student and teacher. Sulkin is also responsible for the carefully designed Oxford series "Twentieth Century Classics", whose current fiction list includes Bennett's *Riceyman Steps* (suggested to Sulkin by Frank Kermode), Nigel Balchin's *Small Back Room*, three novels by Adrian Bell, and Hermann Broch's *Death of Vergil*. It is an eclectic list (eight new-old titles a year) which owes everything to the preferences and prejudices of its editor. But Sulkin, while relishing the opportunity to publish his favourites, does not believe the series will do much to alter the pattern of literary history. Adrian Bell or Nigel Balchin may swell Oxford's profits today, but they are unlikely to contribute much to tomorrow's balance sheets. Sulkin believes that the vast majority of rediscoveries don't work. Peter Carson of Penguin confirms that "more often than not the risk

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doesn't pay off". That risk, incidentally, extends to all Thackeray's novels save *Vanity Fair*, which demonstrates just how small the pool of commercially reprintable fiction really is.

It seems unlikely then, that today's paperback reprint series can do much for dead literature, except to give some titles a little glow of after-life. Most reprint editors feel they have rescued at least one or two reputations: Pringle backs Antonia White, E.H. Young and Rosamond Lehmann; Peter Carson thinks Penguin has done Joyce Cary and Jocelyn Brooke a service; Will Sulkin is fond of Broch. But then Orwell and Greene were similarly hopeful on behalf of the recently forgotten writers of the pre-war period. The only difference between now and then is a difference in price. A pre-war pre-Penguin reprint, even in the little hardback Phoenix Library, cost 3s 6d; modern paperback reprints are, in real terms, approximately three times cheaper.

But price is unlikely to unlock the cemetery gate. Only when the less than enterprising education industry is prepared to re-evaluate its fossilized syllabus, will the enterprising editors at Virago, the Hogarth Press and Oxford Paperbacks help dead authors, as they help living publishers. That may take some time, but for the moment literature is a little richer.

Undaunted by Nigel Cross's pessimism, the *TLS* is preparing its own list of unjustly neglected works of fiction. In a special issue on October 18, more than fifty leading writers and other international figures, will be writing about the stories they would like to see reprinted, or translated, or simply better known. Contributors will include Anita Brookner, J. M. Coetzee, Thom Gunn, G. Cabrere Infante, Claude Lévi-Strauss, David Lodge, Czeslaw Milosz, Iris Murdoch, Anthony Powell, Julian Symons, D. M. Thomas, Alice Thomas Ellis, Frank Tuohy and Auberon Waugh.

Attracting misfortune

Patricia Craig

Jean Rhys: Letters 1931–66
Edited by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly
313pp. Penguin. £4.95.
0 14 007551 8

Jean Rhys, throughout her life, seems to have been beset by troubles, worries and contretemps to a greater extent than most people. Was there something about her that attracted the untoward? Or is this idea just a figment of her fiction? The letters certainly show the author getting along in a bumbling way, but they also point to a degree of robustness and determination in her character, especially as far as literary matters are concerned, which might otherwise have been missed. It's customary to speak of "the Jean Rhys heroine" as if she were indistinguishable from her creator, and to emphasize the haplessness of both. However, as her letters make plain, there was a good deal more to Jean Rhys than that.

Her capacity to irritate is most apparent at the start of this volume, when she is living in London with her second husband Leslie Tilden-Smith, making demands (for flats, attention and so on) that cause friends to shy away from her, and getting on the wrong side of people. Her letters at this time are nervy, incoherent and dispiriting; it isn't until later – and in the face of even greater odds – that she develops a more optimistic and self-mocking manner. There seems to have been no stage in Jean Rhys's life at which things weren't desperately unsatisfactory: can it all be traced back to the chorus girl's chagrin at finding a protector, only to be left by him? In a succinct and perceptive introduction, Francis Wyndham suggests that the significance of this early "humdrum betrayal" was got out of proportion by Jean Rhys, whom it knocked up for good and all. Still, she went on to marry three husbands, and her daughter, Maryvonne, became a great source of gratification to her, as well as being the person who elicited the most cheerful and resolute communications. After Leslie Tilden-Smith's death in 1945 (of a heart attack, while telephones and doctors, in the usual way, remained out of reach to Jean Rhys) the novelist married his cousin Max Hamer; and then life became really dismal. Her third husband appears to have resembled her in his inability to ward off misfortunes, large and small. A prison sentence for Max resulted from his getting into bad hands. Jean Rhys herself, around this time, spent a week in Holloway on a charge of assault; the man upstairs had been rude and she'd smacked his face.

Neighbours cause her a good deal of aggravation, between poisoning her cats and putting it around that she is some sort of shady character who's "impersonating a dead writer called Jean Rhys". Similar annoyances occur wherever she goes. (She hates moving but does a lot of it.) Eventually, in the Devon village where she winds up, she is taken for a witch. This both enrages and amuses her. Disputes with neighbours are for ever arising over such matters as cabbage beds and barbed-wire clothes lines. All the flats and bungalows inhabited by Jean Rhys are equally obnoxious to her (at one moment she remembers writing a story in Paris "in a rather horrid little rue"), and they're all a prey to muddle and blight. Electric cookers conk out, typewriters break down, boilers are awkward, builders abscond with large sums of money, the electricity is sure to fail as the radio is switched on, clocks maliciously go wrong, glass fish fall on Jean Rhys's feet, a whole chapter of a novel gets torn up *by accident*. When someone calls, requiring refreshment, the absent minded author omits to put coffee in the pot, and the visitor gets a cup of hot water. So it goes on. Money is always a problem. At one point we find Jean Rhys selling her bedclothes. She is always cold. A West Indies childhood has left her incapable of relishing English weather. Devon, with its rain and floods and malevolent villages, is especially daunting.

Jean Rhys was not a prolific writer, or one readily satisfied with what she got down on paper. From the letters we learn that a draft of *Wide Sargasso Sea* existed at the time of her second husband's death; and she is still writing this book throughout the 1950s and '60s, while experiencing one setback after another. On the continuing effort to get it completed: "I never knew anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result", she wryly quotes from *The Importance of Being Ernest*. Jean Rhys, as a writer, is all but forgotten at this period, and downcast about her work as a result; however, some encouragement from an actress named Selma Vaz Dias, who wants to adapt *Good Morning, Midnight* for radio, has a galvanizing effect. (Selma Vaz Dias, we learn later, came to look on Jean Rhys's work as partly her own property, persuading the author in 1963 to sign an agreement entitling her to half the proceeds from any Rhys adaptation for radio, television or whatever. This, with only a slight modification, is still in force.) Damp, isolation and the protracted illness of Max Hamer notwithstanding, she works and worries at the book until she gets it right – or as nearly right as she can manage. Pills and whisky – at times she resembles one of Jennifer Johnstone's gallant drinkers, who make abstainers look mean-spirited and prissy – keep her charged.

They must also have contributed to the state of extreme physical disarray into which she'd fallen by the time David Plante began making notes for the portrait of her which appeared in *Difficult Women*, when forgetfulness and anger had her wholly in their grip. This was in the late 1970s (she died in 1979, at not far short of ninety). This volume of letters stops in 1966, when there is still something charming, rather than disconcerting, about her tendency to flit from topic to topic. She rambles picturesquely ("By the way I simply hate these very short skirts . . . Cows have a most inquisitive way of looking at you"): It's a better way to remember her – not as the dotty, weepy encumbrance of several friends, but as the absolute professional who worked on through every kind of disturbance and discouragement ("One more effort gallant horse", she jokes at a low moment), with the phone cut off, an invalid in the house, and a basin in the kitchen to catch the drips.

'Ariel' revisited

Angela Leighton

ANDRÉ MAUROIS
Ariel: A Shelley Romance
Translated by Ella D'Arcy
252pp. Penguin. £1.95.

"The ladies covered their faces with their hands. Yet he was good to look at, his hair full of seaweed, his slender body wet and scented with the salt of the sea". Shelley has inadvertently returned from a sea bathe without his clothes. Unlike the good ladies, however, the author of *Ariel*, now re-issued on Penguin's fiftieth anniversary, takes every opportunity to peep at the preternaturally ethereal, coyly alluring creature of his imagination. André Maurois insists throughout that Shelley is a "saint", an "Elf" a "heavenly spirit", a "wild thing" and, above all, an "angel". This creature rushes through life, shirt collar disarmingly open, eyes bright with inspiration and hair spreading into a halo at every step. Any ungenerous doubts in the reader are quickly dispelled. Shelley, we are assured, was "angelic – too angelic". As angels go, this one proves consistently and uninhibitedly divine.

Unfortunately, however, angels retain their lustre in unfair contrast to mere mortals. Thus, for instance, Shelley's first wife Harriet, who drowned herself in despair at being forsaken for Mary Godwin, is portrayed as a shallow, flirtatious girl – altogether unequal to her high-minded husband. Mary, who suffered not only the angelic Poet's various obsessions with other women, but also the anguish of repeated miscarriages and the deaths of two children, quickly degenerates into a mean-spirited, irascible wife. The reader's sense of veneration is kept rigidly up to the mark. Maurois points out that those night-long readings with the warm-hearted Claire Clairmont were simply proof that Shelley's "morality [was] super-human, angelic". It was therefore a pity that Mary's was less so. Still, we are assured; "To all Mary's grumblings he replied with his usual sweetness". The Poet is at all times, but especially at times of creeping doubt in the reader, blithely spiritual.

However, Maurois avoids the customary dullness of hagiography by making his angel very "good to look at". We feast our eyes on his dark, curling hair, his pale, fine features, his girlish blushes, and delicate throat. Shelley is, from the start, "exceptionally beautiful". When caught in a room full of visitors, naked and weedy, he naturally succeeds in being glamorous as a god and innocent as a child. These sweetly salacious moments always carry a strong moral message. Everything in the book goes to prove that the Poet's beauty will overcome the prudish and conventional objections of the world. To harbour objections, after this, is to align oneself with the prim ladies who dared not look.

Steamy and sentimental, salacious and slushy, *Ariel* is composed of the heady ingredients of popular romance. Shelley emerges from its pages neither a great poet, nor a political radical, nor even a tricksy spirit – but a beautiful hero, only fit for a romance. Political ideas and human contradictions combine in a potent brew. It was no doubt the book's enormous popularity throughout the 1920s (it was favourably reviewed in the *TLS* of June 28, 1923) which helped recommend it to the enterprising first publisher of Penguin. Whether or not the 1980s will be as receptive to this intoxicating biography remains to be seen.

Psychic topography

Dora Hudson

H.D.
Tribute to Freud
194pp. Carcanet. £5.95.
0 856355992
Helen in Egypt
304pp. Carcanet. £6.95.
0 85635 554 2

Carcanet's new edition of *Tribute to Freud* (first published in 1970 and reviewed in the *TLS* of March 23, 1973) gives back to H.D.'s account of her analysis with Freud its original title, "Writing on the Wall", and adds "Advent", her addendum to this account, published for the first time in this country. In "Writing on the Wall" H.D. intertwines a portrait of Freud in the Vienna of the 1930s, shortly before his exile to England, with a poetic and evocative description of their analytic sessions, which focussed on H.D.'s dreams, memories and visions. We see here a Freud concerned less with sexuality and neurosis than with myth, religion and the shared unconscious of humankind; H.D. presents the Freud whose first love was archaeology and whose topography of the human psyche was structured upon the model of Pompeii, with its layered history and buried secrets held intact.

"Advent" is both a less poeticized account of H.D's meetings with Freud and a more personal recounting of autobiographical experiences which lean heavily towards the occult. Its images are less powerful than those of "Writing on the Wall", while the intensity of H.D.'s interest in numerology, astronomy and psychic occurences may appeal only to the *aficianados* of her work. Nonetheless, this is a welcome addition to H.D.'s published works, and fleshes out a number of themes and images running throughout her prose and poetry.

Carcanet has also produced the first British publication of H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*. Written some twenty years after her fine epic poem *Trilogy*, a text which deserves wider reading, it shares many of the same themes and forms; a quest motif, a tripartite structure and an incorporation of the imagism which defined H.D.'s early poetics into an ambitious lyric narrative. Both poems are also concerned with the transformations of myth and legend. In *Helen in Egypt*, "cherchez la femme" takes on a new meaning; Helen ceases to be the cause of Troy's fall and becomes both the subject and object of a search for a truer history; one, moreover, in which women can define their identity outside the limiting categories produced in male mythologies. It thus anticipates recent feminist revisions of dominant myths, but the fascination of H.D.'s writing is that the search is always process rather than product. The poem does not offer its meanings readily and it perhaps lacks variation in tone and pace. Nonetheless, this is a volume which reveals the imaginative depth and cultural breadth of H.D.'s best verse writing.

There

If I got into trouble I was to go to him
and tell him everything.
It didn't matter if I was unhappy, or in love,
or wanted by the police. I could say,
'Daddy, I've killed a Chinaman'
and he'd see what he could do.

He gave me a knife for my birthday
and I cut my hand on it
and flung it away into the long grass,
running after it in vain
as it started to disappear.

It was easy to imagine myself
finding the knife and wearing it on a chain
the way he had shown me,
but not so easy when the grass had grown
and been cut many times,
the garden gone next door.

I must have been looking too far away
or I must have been looking too near.
A wealth of personal detail
accumulates in folders like a life of crime,
but nothing conclusive,
nothing to get arrested for.

HUGO WILLIAMS

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Feminism into fiction: The Women's Press

Laura Marcus

The Women's Press publicity slogan is "live authors, live issues"; this to mark the distinction between its enterprise and Virago's "rediscovery of classics". Its first publications were in fact re-issued classics: Jane Austen's *Love and Friendship*, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. The press now concentrates primarily on contemporary fiction (although novels by May Sarton and by the excellent, anarchic Sylvia Townsend Warner have recently been reprinted); a significant number of first novels, most of them original paperbacks (the majority of Women's Press books, until last year, appeared in paperback only), are on its list. Publishing policy is adventurous and the range of fiction diverse, and includes work by black and non-western writers. many of the novels overtly demonstrate an alliance with the women's movement and a concern with the issues raised by recent feminist theory, helping to break down distinctions between theoretical work and creative writing.

At the Women's Press – while not at Virago – literary value is seen as inseparable from politics. Many of their authors actively write against received definitions of what constitutes literary merit, or programmatically set out to disrupt literary realism and its assumptions about the world. Of course this is precisely the endeavour of the majority of post-modernist writers, many of them male; the difference lies in the political motives behind the anti-realism. The male metafictionalists point to the artificial nature of literary representation, while feminist self-conscious fiction is concerned to show how literary modes and the history of representations have constructed a false image of women. One recurrent concern in feminist *novels is the depiction or creation of a women's history and myth that have been suppressed in* the interests of male dominance.

In *The Visitation* (1983. 224pp. £3.50, 0 7043 3903 X), Michele Roberts incorporates female figures which patriarchy has attempted to destroy, literally or otherwise, because their power is threatening: the witch, the spinner/spinster, the parthenogenetic goddess, the wise-woman. The radical feminist philosopher Mary Daly would seem to be an influence here, but whereas Daly spins off into a matriarchal cosmos, Roberts contains her mythical figures within the dreams and fantasies of her central character, Helen. Helen is a writer, but the voice of *The Visitation* is not quite hers, nor is it that of an omniscient narrator. This disembodied voice transforms scenes of contemporary London life – bathing in Hampstead Heath pond, North London parties, the Portobello Road market – into their counterparts in a mythical Hellenic past or in the ritual-dominated world of Africa, blurring the distinctions between reality and fantasy in a prose which is full, resonant and at times over-charged.

Without this linguistic and mythical apparatus, the novel would be a fairly conventional female *künstlerroman*, as Roberts traces her heroine's progress through childhood, convent school, Oxford and London. The classic "feminine" conflicts – between work and love, autonomy and dependence – are explored in detail. (Roberts is one of the few Women's Press novelists to present heterosexual relationships positively, if not overwhelmingly interestingly). The strengths of the novel lie in its incorporation of a dream text into a realistic framework, in the portrayal of relationships between women across generations, and in its structure: flashbacks to earlier periods in Helen's life are effectively made by means of recurrent images and objects. Elizabeth Baines employs similar narrative devices in *The Birth Machine* (1983. 128pp. £2.95. 0 7043 3917 X), but her fictional world is closer to nightmare than to fantasy. Zelda, the central figure of the novel, gives birth painfully in a high-tech hospital; in her drugged delirium she recreates scenes from the past involving death, danger and the possible murder of a childhood friend. Baines aligns Zelda's body with the landscape in which she grew up; both are violated by machines, tunnelled into and torn apart. This novel's effects are cumulative; flashbacks begin to shape themselves into an increasingly powerful narrative. Less [illegible] sciously literary than *The Visitation*, Baines's novel varies its tone more effectively, and its presentation of the world of childhood contrasts nicely with a sharp satire on the hospital world and its attitudes to women and childbirth.

Anna Livia's *Accommodation Offered* (183pp. £7.95. Paperback, £3.95. 0 7043 2857 7) was one of twenty titles chosen for this year's Feminist Book promotion. In this novel, a commentary is provided by a cast of characters called the Liberty Boddesses, celestial females who manifest themselves in earthly form as garden plants and listen with rapt attention to the narratives of three women who share a house. A generous view of the novel would claim that it humorously points to the mixture of voyeurism and sympathetic identification which comprises the experience of reading itself. More brutally, whimsical fantasy and the unmediated "experiences" which make up the women's narratives do not sit happily together.

These three writers, all of them British, work with a hybrid of fantasy and realism. It's easy enough to point to the theoretical and feminist ideas informing this mixture – the "authority of experience" is brought together with the power of the mythical and the imaginative. "Radical feminist consciousness spirals in all directions, dis-covering the past, creating/disclosing the present/future", as Mary Daly puts it. In literary terms, however, the success of this hybrid form varies. Roberts and Baines have enough skill and stylistic control to blend fantasies and dreams with naturalistic prose; they have also remembered that reading for the plot can offer some real pleasures.

There is a very different exploration of fantasies in the Canadian novelist Joan Barfoot's *Dancing in the Dark* (1982. 192pp. £3.95. 0 7043 3895 5). The novel is a sustained and surprisingly compelling interior monologue; its speaker, Edna, describes the domestic and conjugal routines which constituted her adult experience as a dutiful and adoring wife. The fantasy of perfection is shattered when she learns of her husband's infidelity; her murder of him, obliquely presented, leads to her incarceration in the mental hospital where she recounts her tale. The novel ends with her acting out the fantasy which she had always seen as a guilty aberration; the dancing of the title. Although Barfoot does not overtly offer an "awakening" for Edna (she shares her name with that of Kate Chopin's heroine in *The Awakening*), she does suggest that Edna achieves a clearer vision of the realities of her former life. The novel is in fact more subversive than Edna's muted narration would suggest; the stabbing of her husband becomes the orgasm she was denied in their sexual relations. At other moments, Edna maintains her belief in the comforts of being contained by a man. Like its violence, then, the novel's feminist politics are not made through explicit statement; a welcome relief after Barbara Ellen Wilson's *Ambitious Women* (1983. 240pp. £3.50. 0 7043 3902 1). This, the harrowing tale of feminists Holly and Allison, volunteer workers in a battered wives' refuge in Seattle who unwittingly become involved with a terrorist organization, draws to its close with the following utterance:

> "In a strange way, Holly, there's something refreshing about being around people, around women, who know they've been shafted, not just by the law, but by the entire society. It means you don't have to pretend anymore that things are okay and going to get better."

Nobody talks like that. There's a more serious issue raised by this kind of writing: characters who in other respects conform to traditional realist concepts of individuality are required to speak collective truths.

The black American writer Alice Walker surmounts this difficulty by concealing the language of polemical statement in a vivid and idiosyncratic vernacular prose. *The Color Purple* (1983. 256pp. £3.95. 0 7043 3905 6) explores themes of racial and sexual oppression through the story of Celie, a young black girl raped by her step-father, separated from her children and sister and married off to a man for whom she is no more than a servant. She tells her own story in a series of letters, addressed first to God, later to her sister, Nettie.

> Dear God,
> Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me. Mr. — say Cause [illegible] good for – he don't finish. He just tuck his chin over the paper like he do. Remind me of Pa.

Celie's salvation comes from the support of other women, particularly that of the singer Shug Avery, who teaches her first to love her own body and then to become independent of men and marriage. The plausibility or otherwise of Celie's "awakening" does not become an issue in the novel, nor does the fairy-tale happy ending jar. This is partly due to its "fable" quality, partly because Walker controls form and language so tightly that the moments of conversion can be contained. In less assured feminist writing the reader can feel assaulted by them.

One of the most striking aspects of *The Color Purple* is its manipulation of the epistolary form, and the short stories in Walker's recent collection, *In Love and Trouble* (1984. 160pp. £7.50. Paperback, £2.95. 0 7043 2852 6) reveal considerable technical versatility. Departing from black vernacular, or rather its literary version, Walker employs a variety of narrative voices, tones and tenses, ranging from the almost Faulknerian "The Child Who Favoured Daughter", to the disaffected staccato rhythms of "*Really, Doesn't Crime Pay*?" In other stories a father mutilates his daughter after discovering that she is a white man's lover; an old black woman wreaks revenge through magic on a white woman who had denied her food during the Depression. Black women may be doubly oppressed, by black and white men alike, but there's no easy assumption of female solidarity across class and racial boundaries.

The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Walker's first (1970) novel, now published in this country for the first time (247pp. £8.95. Paperback, £3.95. 0 7043 2876 3), depicts the lives of three generations of a black American family. The South they inhabit still retains the structures of slavery nearly a century after its abolition, and the first part of the novel shows the brutalizing effects of systematic degradation on men whose initial resolve was to break the patterns of violence and hatred set by their fathers. The relationship between Grange Copeland and his grand-daughter opens up the possibility of change, and allows Walker to embark on the themes to which she returns in later works: the necessity for individual responsibility, the movement from repetition to progression, the redemptive power of love. Powerfully and lucidly written, only occasionally slipping into polemic, the novel has a compelling directness.

Toni Cade Bambara's most recent collection of short stories, *Gorilla, My Love* (1984. 177pp. £3.95. 0 7043 3927 7) is an upbeat affair. Both here and in *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive* (1984. 208pp. £3.95. 0 7043 3944 7), she presents black culture as embattled but unbowed. Favoured narrator-protagonists are street-wise adolescent girls "who don't take shit from no-one" and acquiesce only in the authority of mothers who are fearsome when roused. Bambara depicts black communities in which ties of blood and friendship are fiercely defended; her youthful protagonists bear no resemblance to the alienated teenagers who have become a staple ingredient of white American fiction. These stories are colloquial and ebullient, but the humour with which she derides the skewed vision of the white world looking in at the black is marred at times by moral sententiousness: "Cause you gots to take care of the older folk . . . cause old folks is the nation."

Too much Bambara taken at once can cause indigestion: she lacks Walker's ability to vary pace and tone. Or it may be that these stories travel less well; Bambara's descriptions sometimes seem to work wholly against her political intent by coming uneasily close to racist stereotypes:

> The brother rearranged his clothes slowly, smoothing himself, moving back into cool rhythms, leaned over and snatched something from the hood, looking good, taking his own sweet stylin time.

This is self-conscious writing masquerading as spontaneity, and it suggests that "reading jazz" (one critic's description of Bambara's prose) might not be entirely satisfactory. Both more artless and more powerful is the Iranian Manny Shirazi's *Javady Alley* (1984. 166pp. £3.95. 0 7043 3928 5), a first novel which succeeds in vividly depicting the customs and structures of its author's culture.

The Women's Press's most recent (all-paperback) venture is into feminist science fiction; first to come out, earlier this year, were Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (214pp. £1.95. 0 7043 3949 8) and *Extra (Ordinary) People* (161pp. £1.95. 0 7043 3950 1), Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (212pp. £1.95. 0 7043 3947 1) and Jane Palmer's *The Planet Dweller* (147pp. £1.95. 0 7043 3948 X). *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*, by Naomi Mitchison (160pp. £1.95. 0 7043 3970 6), *Native Tongue*, by Suzette Haden Elgin (301pp. £2.50. 0 7043 3971 4), *The Adventures of Alyx*, by Joanna Russ (192pp. £1.95. 0 7043 3972 2), and *Despatches from the Frontiers of the Female Mind*, edited by Jen Green and Sarah Lefanu (248pp. £2.50. 0 7043 3973 0) are published this week. The press's declared intention in publishing science fiction by and about women is "to present exciting and provocative feminist images of the future that will offer an alternative vision of science and technology and challenge male domination of the science-fiction tradition itself". This highlights the belief that control of the forms of literary representation is linked to control in the sphere of political action; from this perspective, science fiction ceases to be "escapist" literature. The redefinition of the genre also occurs through the absence of interest in technology *per se*. Doris Lessing, one of the most articulate spokeswomen for the genre, has described its relevance as moral, political and aesthetic. Politically and morally, Lessing states, it reveals and examines the nature and potential of present policies, or "scientific and social possibilities". Aesthetically, it stretches and fractures literary realism, allowing for the exploration of plural and flexible realities. Lessing has been an important influence on women science fiction writers, although the futures she projects are not necessarily those imagined by more radical feminists. In Women's Press science fiction, the future is governed by women. The preoccupations of science fiction are linked to other feminist projects; the quest for past matriarchal societies is mirrored by the dream of a woman-centred future. Utopianism looks both ways.

Joanna Russ has learned all that a radical feminist science fiction writer should know about the genre; but this does not prevent *The Female Man* from being very nearly unreadable. Her prose is a singular affair, marked by a simplicity of diction and a remarkable obfuscation of temporality, context, place, addresser, addressee, and, ultimately, of the point. The purpose of Russ's metafictional devices only becomes clear when she uses them to anticipate and refute the anti-feminist comments of her putative critics. But it's possible to point to poor writing without attacking feminism. This is not to imply that feminist theory and feminist fiction should remain untouched by each other; indeed, it is impossible that this should be so. In the majority of the Women's Press novels the dialogue between the two is highly productive. In the case of a few novels, the reader is being offered feminism-by-numbers.

The success of feminist publishing has been adequately noted elsewhere (The Women's Press now shares a very varied field with imprints such as Pandora, Sheba and Onlywomen), although it remains true that women's writing is more read than reviewed. Devices that have become familiar to readers of Women's Press novels of recent years are the blend of fantasy and realist writing, explicit commentary on the creation of plot and character and the disruption of fiction's pretensions to imitate reality. Yet the authors mentioned here are prepared to push the novel form only so far; its limits remain intact. In some instances – Frankie Finn's *Out on the Plain* (1984. 160pp. £7.95. Paperback, £3.50. 0 7043 2853 4) is one – invention is sacrificed to whimsy and derivativeness. "Thinking back through our literary mothers" should be more than an exercise in imitation. One conclusion to be drawn from all this is that we are seeing a late twentieth-century version of that mixture of dismissiveness and desire that has characterized attitudes towards the novel since its inception. Though the Women's Press symbol, a domestic iron bearing the legend "steaming ahead", suggests that "women's work" is here being turned to good feminist effect, and some of the novels bear it out, a further corollary suggests itself: despite Press's and writers' claims to radical feminism, could it be that the novel is still a safe place for women?

Paperbacks

Archaeology

ROBERT SILVERBERG (Editor). *Great Adventures in Archaeology from Belzoni to Woolley*. 336pp. Penguin. £3.95. 0 14 007728 6. □ First published in 1966 (and reviewed in the *TLS* of August 25 that year) this well-chosen anthology collects together some of the greatest, most romantic moments of the history of the "Classic Period" of archaeology: the excavation of Herculaneum, the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamen, the rediscovery of Babylon, the undersea dive into the Sacred Well of the Mayans. Here also are the pictures which properly belong to those exciting days: Leonard Woolley's colossal excavations of the Great Ziggurat of Ur of the Chaldees, Howard Carter making the first incision into the wrapping of Tutankhamen's shroud, and Schliemann's wife adorned in the jewellery discovered at Troy. Mr Silverberg's eye for such moments of excitement is good; the passages selected go a long way to explain why armchair archaeology was for so long of such great public interest. Take, for instance, the sheer suspense in this passage from Carter's account of his great discovery in the Valley of the Kings: "slowly, desperately slowly it seemed to us as we watched, the remains of passage debris that encumbered the lower part of the doorway were removed, until at last we had the whole door clear before us. The decisive moment had arrived. With trembling hands I made a tiny breach in the upper left hand corner . . .".

Biography and memoirs

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM. *A Diary, 1824–1889*. 404pp. Penguin. £4.95. 0 14 057025 X. □ Allingham's diary, long known as a vivid record of the conversation of Tennyson and Carlyle, makes a welcome reappearance. The diary is an obvious gift to so accomplished an anthologist as John Julius Norwich, who provides an enthusiastic introduction to this reprint from the 1907 edition. He makes rather higher claims for the "foolish little poet" (Carlyle's phrase, despite commendations elsewhere) than are perhaps deserved, but there is no denying the good ear for dialogue that made Allingham so successful a Boswell to his heroes (and even Carlyle was disposed to grant his friend's accuracy). Good-humoured as a raconteur, good-natured as the meek victim of some of Tennyson's snubs, Allingham wrote a charming book full of insights into Victorian literary society. Its owes much to Helen Allingham's sensitive editing, and one would have liked to know more of the texts on which this mixture of diary and autobiography was based.

The Autobiography of Margot Asquith. Edited and with an introduction by Mark Bonham Carter. 342pp. Methuen. £4.95. 0 413 58700 2. □ "The King", Curzon reported to his wife, "let fly about Margot. . . . He severely condemns Asquith for not reading, and Crewe for reading and passing, her scandalous chatter." The storm over this *Autobiography* broke before the first volume had even been published; and some of Margot's more startling remarks appeared only in the serialized version. The term "septic", originally applied to aspects of Lady de Grey's character, was altered to "unsound"; and Lord Salisbury's remarks about tariff reform, while still patently apocryphal, were no longer ascribed to the year after that great man's death. For the one-volume abridgement (first published in 1962 and reviewed in the *TLS* of November 9 that year) Mark Bonham Carter pruned most severely in the later passages. The account, for instance, of the Premier waiting for French's telegram the day after Mons has disappeared. The "rare candour" of the autobiography, to which the editor draws attention in a delightful introduction, had limits. Margot did not tell her readers, if indeed she remembered herself, that in May 1915 she had credited Lloyd George with "the *sweetest* nature in the world". By the end of the war most of her political heroes had failed her; and some of her diary references to them were adjusted before being inserted in the Autobiography. Telling all requires more than a lack of reticence.

VIKTOR SHKLOVSKY. *A Sentimental Journey: Memoirs, 1917–1922*. 304pp. Cornell University Press. $9.95. 0 8014 9291 2. □ Viktor Shklovsky died last year in Russia at the age of ninety-one. His memoirs of the years of revolution, civil war and temporary exile in Berlin first appeared in 1923, the English translation in 1970 (reviewed in the *TLS* of June 25 that year). This first-hand account, by a leading Formalist, of a society in turmoil owes much to Sterne – utterly unsentimental, detached, fragmentary, paradoxical, the memoirs tell of experiences at the front (where he was severely wounded), in Persia and in St Petersburg, philosophical asides jostling with vivid recollections, literary reference with political comment. Not a Bolshevik himself, Shklovsky is often critical of their actions, but as he comments, "We were all being swept along by a river and the whole of wisdom consisted in yielding to its current."

NOEL STOCK *The Life of Ezra Pound* 610pp. Penguin. £5.95. 0 14 058001 8. □ This biography by one of the most prolific and persistent of Pound scholars, was originally published in 1970 (and reviewed in the *TLS* of August 21 that year) just before Pound's death, and is now reissued in time for Pound's Centenary. For fifteen years it has been the standard biographical account. Despite recent work on Pound's family history, the Crawfordsville "scandal", and the personal relationships of later years, it remains the fullest, fairest treatment of Pound's world, and invaluable for a factual insight into the interface between Pound's studies and readings, and the poetry which encompassed and expressed that mental world.

RALEIGH TREVELYAN. *A Hermit Disclosed*. 308pp. Xanadu. £6.50. 0 947761 04 7. □ This account of Jimmy Mason, the Hermit of Great Canfield, a timid recluse who, allegedly when disappointed in love, shut himself away among his bee hives in a primitive hut, was first published in 1960 and reviewed in the *TLS* of March 18 that year. He remained there for over fifty years, depending on his brother for food and emerging only at night. Mason died in 1942 at the age of eighty-four and his diaries, which dated from 1895 but which looked back to the 1880s, were discovered in the loft of his old home by the eighteen-year-old Raleigh Trevelyan, who took up the quest for the Hermit. Trevelyan's researches are set out as a story very much in the manner of *A Quest for Corvo*. Trevelyan's Hermit is not a romantic figure, nor does his rural retreat have any pastoral charm. The picture of pre-suburban Essex village life is of an amorphous, cruel, in-turning society: in his seclusion the Hermit's few pleasures included hearing reports of local deaths and hanging out fruit and money on a hedge to entice the children.

Classical studies

G. R. WATSON. *The Roman Soldier*. 256pp. Thames and Hudson. £6.95. 0 500 27376 6. □ It seems to have been a received idea among the Romans themselves as much as among successive aspirants to their imperial mantle that the arts for which they were peculiarly fitted by nature were those of war and government. After Actium it became obvious that the new Principate needed a large standing army to police the borders of its far-flung Empire, and in 13BC service in the legions became a career open to all Roman citizens, with a nominal duration of twenty years, steady pay and a lump sum on retirement (sums later dwarfed by donatives from emperors whose titles depended more and more on the loyalty of the Army). The twenty-eight or so legions (above 16,000 men) were supported by a roughly equal number of provincial auxiliaries, and in Rome herself by the praetorian guard, urban cohorts, *vigiles*; in addition there were fleets at Ravenna, Misenum and elsewhere. The Roman genius for administration ensured that what was initially simple and efficient became progressively more fantastically complex and sclerotic, so that it is a great credit to G. R. Watson that in 154 pages of text he reduces

a chaos of citations from papyri and inscriptions, from Vegetius and Ulpian (all recorded in Latin in the Notes) to beautiful clarity and order. *The Roman Soldier* was first published in 1969 and reviewed in the *TLS* of August 28 that year.

History

ELIE KEDOURIE. *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies*. 502pp. University Press of New England. £12.75. 0 87451 304 9. □ Since the first publication of this collection of essays in 1970 (reviewed in the *TLS* of May 14 that year) "the Chatham House version" has become an accepted phrase to describe the view of modern Middle Eastern history given currency by the late Arnold Toynbee and widely adopted during the 1930s by what may be called the British official classes. Put in crude terms the Chatham House version maintains that Britain (and other European states) swindled the Arabs during and after the First World War. It was Toynbee's especial sin, Kedourie indicates, that he provided a respectable academic basis for the fanciful and doctrinaire views of many British intellectuals and officials.

Toynbee himself replied to Kedourie's charges in a review of the first edition of *The Chatham House Version*. Toynbee argued, *inter alia*, that Kedourie overestimated the importance of the views, correct or otherwise, of the British official classes; Britain's policy in the Middle East was shaped by the decline of British power; withdrawal was inevitable. In a preface to this new edition Kedourie denies that inevitability can be an explanation and insists that British policies were a matter of choice.

Choice is one of the three pillars of what may be called the Kedourie version, an account of modern Middle Eastern history elaborated in a number of books and articles beginning with *England and the Middle East* in 1956. Without choice, writes Kedourie, history would "lose its savour and the historical enterprise would be a pointless recital of inevitabilities". As he shows in essays such as "Minorities" the fate of human beings is controlled not by impersonal history but by the ambitions and fantasies of other human beings. The second pillar is professionalism – the painstaking search of the archives and the meticulous use of documents – a quality demonstrated in, for example, his much quoted essay on Sa'ad Zaghlul and the British. And the third is Kedourie's hatred of pretence and in particular of the humbug of intellectuals; to murder an innocent is wicked but to pretend the act is for the greater good of mankind is unforgiveable. For Kedourie the Grand Inquisitor poses no problem.

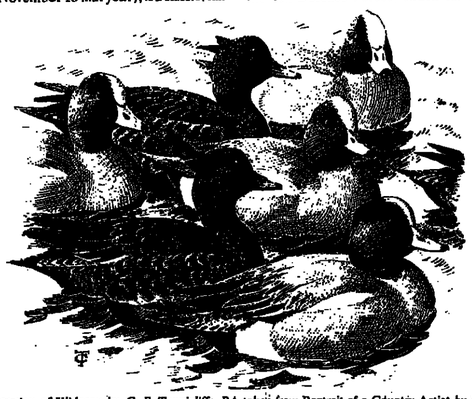
It is a striking tribute to its author that the Kedourie version has advanced in thirty years from being regarded as a clever, but essentially perverse interpretation of Middle Eastern history to being accepted as the most authoritative account of the events it describes.

ALAN CAMPBELL-JOHNSON. *Mission with Mountbatten*. 383pp. Hamish Hamilton. £5.95. 0 241 11536 1. □ Current nostalgia for the Last Days of the Raj may usefully be supplemented, even dispelled, by Alan Campbell-Johnson's record of the circumstances in which two centuries of British rule were brought to an end. The author served as Press Secretary during the five months of Mountbatten's Viceroyalty, from March to August 15, 1947, and *Mission with Mountbatten*, first published in 1951 (and reviewed in the *TLS* on December 14 that year), consists of the day-by-day journal that Campbell-Johnson kept during this period and the further ten months of Mountbatten's service as the first Governor-General of the Independent Dominion of India. The fierce sense of urgency created by the August deadline, before which a plan for the handover had to be agreed with the Indian leaders, and administrative arrangements made for its implementation, is vividly brought out. Hopes for a unitary successor state were soon abandoned in the face of Jinnah's commitment to Pakistan, and the hard bargaining that ensued, involving not only Hindu and Moslem but also the Sikh leaders and the Indian Princes – 562 of them, controlling a third of the land area of India and a quarter of the population – is described in absorbing detail. The author's admiration for Mountbatten's ruthless energy and diplomatic skills in eliciting agreement from the Indian leaders, as well as for Lady Mountbatten's relief work during the Punjab migrations and massacres that followed Partition, make this, inevitably, an Anglocentric although liberal-minded account of what it was like to be at the centre of events during one of the most significant periods in post-war history. Campbell-Johnson sees the British as leaving gracefully and in a flood of goodwill; but then as Rajagopalachari, Mountbatten's successor as Governor-General pointed out, if the British hadn't handed over power when they did, there would have been no power to hand over.

ROBERT GRAVES and ALAN HODGE. *The Long Week-end, A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939*. 472pp. Hutchinson. £5.95. 0 09 161911 4. □ Of its type – amateur contemporary social history – *The Long Week-End*, originally published in 1940 (and reviewed in the *TLS* of November 16 that year), is a classic, full of information, mainly creamed from the newspapers, and studded with memorable phrases. Professional historians following later, above all, Charles Mowat, in the first scholarly study of the inter-war years published in 1955, seized on it gratefully. But the systematic study of social history has developed greatly since the Second World War and the professionals have engaged more boldly with their own contemporary world: frankly there are now better, if not necessarily more readable, books around, most notably John Stevenson's volume in the new *Penguin Social History of Britain*. The major problem with amateur history is that giving way to effect (one could never say "striving" when speaking of these two brilliant stylists) takes precedence over getting it right, the first and far from simple duty of the professional: inaccuracies stand and, more critically, flat contradictions are left unresolved. Thus, pushing double exaggeration into double error, Graves and Hodge say of the 1918 election: "the Opposition to the Coalition Government had not had time to raise its head from the dust into which the Defence of the Realm Act had crushed it; so that in most constituencies no alternative candidate was offered to the Lloyd George nominee". Several chapters later, the correct, and highly significant, information is revealed that in 1918 Labour, in fact, polled 2,250,000 votes. The two chapters featuring this contradiction are entitled, respectively "Revolution Averted, 1919" and "Revolution Again Averted, 1926": what the authors mean by "revolution", and what likelihood they really thought there was of its actually occurring is never made clear. Graves and Hodge obviously did not understand the relationship of the ILP to the Labour Party (one cannot altogether blame them), yet they make a neat point on the ending of the coal subsidy which began the chain of events leading to the General Strike: "The Miners' Union and the TUC took this as a challenge to declare the class-war that they had now heard so much loose talk about, chiefly from Conservative papers". *The Long Week-End* was last re-issued in 1949: the two-page preface from those days of "dullness and restrictiveness" is, like the entire book, a primary document of much interest.

Japan

HENRY SCOTT STOKES. *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*. 271pp. Penguin £3.95. 0 14 007248 9. YUKIO MISHIMA. *Yukio Mishima on Hagakure: The samurai ethic and modern Japan*. Translated by Kathryn Sparling. 144pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 004923 1. □ On November 25, 1970, the bloodily decapitated corpse of the Japanese novelist and playwright Yukio Mishima lay on the floor of an upstairs room at the headquarters of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces in central Tokyo. After holding a general to ransom and compelling him to parade his men to listen to a fiery – but ineffective – ultra-nationalist harangue from Mishima, the writer turned on his heels, re-entered the building and ritually disembowelled himself. His second, one of Mishima's 100–strong band of para-military students who had trained with the Self-Defence Forces, struck his leader's head off in the customary way – but clumsily, taking several strokes – and was then beheaded himself. Among the journalists who were on the scene of the earnage within minutes was Mishima's friend, the *Times* correspondent Henry Scott Stokes. Stokes later wrote a biography and literary critique of Mishima (first published in 1975 and reviewed in the *TLS* of April 11 that year) which is now reissued in paperback, presumably to capitalize on the recrudescence of interest which is likely to follow the distribution of the film *Mishima*. Penguin have also reprinted *Mishima on Hagakure* (first published in 1977 and reviewed in the *TLS* of December 16 that year), a miscellany of lectures and essays on a seventeenth-century treatise on the samurai code.



An Illustration of Widgeon by C. F. Tunnicliffe, RA taken from Portrait of a Country Artist *by Ian Niall (160pp. Gollancz. £6.95. 0 575 03964 X), first published in 1980.*

Mishima remains a paradox, repellent yet attractive. Taken over as a child by an overbearing invalid grandmother who compelled him to spend five years at her bedside, elbowing his mother away, Mishima was a puny boy who in adult life compensated for earlier feelings of physical inferiority by ferocious muscleman exercises. He was once photographed wearing nothing but loincloth, boots, and yachting-cap, leaning against a powerful motor-bike. He learned the pleasures of solitary ejaculation by gazing on a picture of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian. He was also a shoplifter and one of the highlights of a visit to England in the sixties was to observe the man he took to be the perfect example of the English gentleman, Harold Macmillan, dispensing degrees in the Sheldonian. Camp and kitsch were the keynotes of his sexual and social life, with its strong flavour of homosexual camaraderie, its contempt for the mundane material happiness the Japanese people (at last) discovered for themselves after 1950, and its nostalgic regret for the samurai rebels against modernization and westernization in the 1870s and the young officers who mutinied against the government in February 1936.

The rodomontades and ultra-nationalist verbiage inevitably recall d'Annunzio. Yet not only Mishima's suicide, which he had rehearsed for years, contradicts this facile image. He was a fluent and versatile literary craftsman, who believed that life should combine aesthetic creativity (*bun*) with the action of the warrior (*bu*). Peaceful post-war Japan allowed expression only to the former. Hence his recruitment of his own student samurai force, whose lush uniforms he designed himself. At the same time he began to write his last work, the tetralogy called the *Sea of Fertility* through a young hero who dies and is repeatedly reincarnated. Mishima does not seem to have been particularly religious, and the third volume, *The Temple of Dawn*, set against the background of Thai Buddhism, is heavy with ill-digested theology; the English reader is irresistibly reminded of Rider Haggard. But death and dissolution preside over *The Sea of Fertility*, as they do over much of Mishima's writing. The spilling of intestines, when it came, seemed like the ineluctable consequence of a lifetime spent anticipating it, hoping for it.

The Stokes biography is a personal account, and there has been much documentation made available on Mishima since it was first published, but it remains the best book on Mishima for Western readers, well-informed, enthusiastic, compassionate, but not taken in.

Music

CONSTANT LAMBERT. *Music Ho!* 287pp. The Hogarth Press. £4.95. 0 7012 0603 9. □ Constant Lambert made his reputation with *The Rio Grande* when he was only twenty-two; *Music Ho!* (first published in 1934 and reviewed in the *TLS* of April 12 that year), the only literary classic of the early twentieth-century English music renaissance, appeared when he was twenty-eight. It was an extraordinary achievement but, sadly, marks the high point of his artistic creativity. He set out to study the music of the 1920s from the perspective of the 1930s; but *Music Ho!* is much more than that. It is, above all, as its subtitle makes clear, "a study of music in decline". Although popularly supposed to be a rebel, Lambert quickly emerged as more of an "heir", to borrow the terminology used at the time by Vaughan Williams and Holst. He saw what it took others decades to see, that for all the polemics and manifestos for and against one or other of the new styles of music – from the nationalists to the "Official Revolution" of Schönberg – the fundamental purpose of music itself was in danger of being eroded. On the one hand it was being battered by the "appalling popularity" of the new mechanical means of reproducing music, and, on the other, suffering from the deliberate isolation of so many modern composers. *Music Ho!* remains an essential comment on this decisive moment in the history of Western music, especially for those who feel that we are now in what Lambert feared would be a "psychological cul-de-sac".

Religion

PETER LEVI. *The English Bible 1534–1859*. 222pp. Worthing: Churchman. £3.95. 185093 015 5. □ Peter Levi reprints portions of scripture in English translations from Tyndale's of 1534, whose title as begetter of the Authorized Version of 1611 is immediately evident, and Coverdale's (the first full Bible in English) of 1535, whose Psalms are still rightly conserved in the Book of Common Prayer, as well as excerpts from other sixteenth-century precursors of the AV – The Great, Geneva, and Bishops' Bibles – and the Douai – Rheims translation that English-speaking Roman Catholics essentially used for about 350 years. To them in *The English Bible* (first published in 1974 and reviewed in the *TLS* of August 30 that year) Levi adds some examples of later unofficial renderings such as the craggy Hugh Broughton's (1662), the vacuously urbane Edward Harwood's (1768) and William Barnes's dialect "Zong o' Zongs" (1859). A well-written but hectic chase through the political and religious history is supplied in the introduction, clarified by headnotes to each version cited. The footnotes betray an irrevelevantly antiquarian philological interest on Peter Levi's part; yet he should never have printed "menstruous flows" for "menstruous floores" in his modernized spelling of Lamentations 1:17 in the Douai Bible (1609–10) – "flowers" is the word for the period.

Reviews by: Michael Trend, Alan Bell, M. G. Brock, Elizabeth Winter, Marianne Korn, Lindsay Duguid, Keith McCullough, M. E. Yapp, J. K. L. Walker, Arthur Marwick, Louis Allen, and Richard Brain.

A pragmatic Popular Educator

John Sutherland

A history of modern literature (especially fiction) could be written around the disinclination of the British public to buy books. To the despair of the publishing and retail trade, Britons will beg, borrow and steal; but they will not pay for reading matter what they quite readily shell out for their whisky, cinema, theatre, television and newspapers. Nor is it just the philistines who are stingy about books. Shortly before his death, George Orwell – a bookman if ever there was one – calculated that he spent annually less on books than on the Woodbines that were killing him (around £11 a year).

To the reflective mind, there is nothing illogical in the paradox of wanting books, but not wanting to buy them. Most new books which are bought at hardback prices – particularly novels – are read only once by any one person. And yet, they are among the more durable products of western civilization. Books usually look better than their owners after fifty years. Public libraries reckon a hardback is good for 150 borrowings before it falls apart. Buying a new hardback book for personal consumption is as irrational as buying a taxi to go out for the evening.

Historically, the book trade has found various means to circumvent purchaser resistance. The most successful has been the public lending library, which gives its users the comforting illusion that they are getting books for nothing. In fact, like free education, library books are paid for indirectly by rates and taxes. The major expansion of the public library system in Great Britain followed the 1956 Roberts report, itself an outgrowth of the great nationalizing initiatives of the post-war Labour Government. But the British public's addiction to borrowing books goes back further, to the commercial circulating libraries of the nineteenth century. These rested on that absurdity of publishing history, the three-volume novel selling at 31s 6d. Enormously expensive (about £60 in current value) the three-decker effectively discouraged buying and herded consumers into the library system.

British efficiency in lending books has deformed patterns of purchase which have developed elsewhere in otherwise comparable countries. The Americans, for instance, developed the book club – an institution which has never been allowed properly to take off in Britain. In the absence of a "comprehensive and efficient" public library system, the French and Italians are more used to buying their books; typically in a cheaper, soft-covered form. Only in Britain has the borrowing of entertaining reading matter been institutionalized (three-quarters of all public library loans are fiction). The consequence is grossly stunted rates of sale. A hardback is a bestseller with 10,000 sales – bizarre in a country where a newspaper can sell three million copies a day and the latest film often has an audience of twice that number. All new books in Britain are worst sellers, whatever the lists claim.

Library patronage creates a secure system of supply. But it also means small editions, high prices and – at the end of the chain – scant payment for the writer. It also means that one has to go to the books in the library, rather than help beating a path to the consumer's door in the usual commercial fashion. There are times when the reader can't, or won't, make an expedition for his books. One of the major transforming influences on reading habits in the mid-nineteenth century was the railway revolution. Victorian railway stations were similar in many ways to the departure lounges in international airports today (where, incidentally, the most innovative paperback bookshops are currently to be found). At stations congregated large numbers of prime book consumers, well-off, literate adults facing the prospect of sitting down with nothing to do for the next few hours. In the 1840s and 1850s, the captive railway reader inspired George Routledge to devise his various libraries of cheap reprints. They carried novels and other light reading at the rock-bottom price of one shilling (5p). But by the 1870s had been surpassed by later generations of even cheaper reprints aimed at the casual reader. (It is significant that the idea for Penguin books occurred to Lane as he waited for a train).

Railway reading became a byword in the nineteenth century for the morally lax pleasures of the sensation novel and near-pornography. W. H. Smith were given the monopoly (which they inexplicably retain to this day) in 1848 on condition that they purified the British rail traveller's source of reading matter. In the 1830s and 1840s, the worthy but poor reader of books became a target for well-meaning authorities who conceived books as instruments of social instruction; education on the cheap. Foremost were Charles Knight and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. For this party, cheap books were not hedonistic indulgence but a means to raise the working classes. The cheap, self-improving book has for the last 150 years had an honoured role in British culture (honoured, but not always profitable: Charles Knight, like many of his philanthropic successors, went bankrupt). Typically these books were not reprints, but originals tailored to the needs of their semi-skilled audience.

A major contradiction in the condition of cheap, and especially paperback, books is their disposability. The Germans have a useful compound word for them, *Wegwerfliteratur*, "throw-away literature". But psychologically it is very difficult to throw away books, however little they cost. The urge is to keep them, to compile a "library". It was this bibliophile hoarding instinct that Ernest Rhys aimed at with his Everyman series in 1906. Essentially, what Everyman promised was that the middle-class reader might assemble a personal library of handsomely printed classics which would have the same relationship to the great institutional and aristocratic collections as the semi-detached garden does to Sissinghurst or Kew. It would perhaps not be too much of an over-simplification to say that railway reading, useful knowledge and Everymans classics combine in the mid-twentieth-century phenomenon of the Penguin book.

Few publishers last fifty years, and only one paperback publisher has managed it. Penguin have every right to the self-congratulation they are now heaping on themselves. To have survived so long supplying the cheapest books in the market is a notable commercial feat. To have also supplied the very best books is a marvel.

Among their promotional bundle of anniversary material, Penguin have drawn up a chronology of milestones and landmarks. It presents the serene unfolding of a brilliant idea whose time had come when Allen Lane launched his first ten volumes in July, 1935. Smooth crescendo is the pattern it would have us see in the firm's growth. But for those not directly involved in celebration, it makes more sense to see Penguin's progress as a series of discontinuous phases. Negotiating its changes of character and the crises which accompany them has been a greater achievement than anything suggested by the gross statistics (50 million copies sold last year, for instance) with which we are currently bombarded.

The origins have the neatness of folklore. Returning in 1934 from a weekend with Agatha Christie, Lane – a man notoriously prone to boredom – was made to wait an hour at Exeter station. History does not tell us, but presumably the bar was closed. He was appalled at the selection which the Smith's bookstall offered him, and as a publisher saw his opportunity. The primal idea of Penguin, then, was as the kind of good read which would beguile a train journey for the painless expenditure of sixpence (then the price of ten cigarettes). Lane had learnt his publishing with the Bodley Head, and Penguin books as physical objects were accordingly rather superior. But the original motive was commercially opportunistic. The book trade was not cheered by Lane's cut-price opposition to the standard half-crown reprint (invariably brought out by the parent hardback firm). George Orwell articulated a common fear that if successful, Penguin would upset a publishing applecart whose balance depended on high prices. "It is", he observed, "a great mistake to imagine that cheap books are good for the book trade."

The two standard biographical accounts of Lane (by W. E. Williams and J. E. Morpurgo) claim that the *TLS* was "curt" and "dismissive" about Penguins in July 1935. In fact, the paper described the first batch of ten fairly enough as a "new series of sixpenny reprints . . . bound in stiff paper covers, printed in two colours, which slip into the pocket". But what is striking in the *TLS* announcement is its conceptual vacancy. It was not until the mid-1950s that the term "paperback" (often compounded with "revolution") became current usage. Penguins grew to maturity without anyone in the book trade or the reading public having to put any other name to them.

Penguin's initial commercial breakthrough in 1935 is, like the story of Lane on the railway platform, again legendary. The Woolworth's buyer was not impressed by the dummy shown him. But he consulted his wife; she thought they were pretty books, and he trusted her intuition. Boosted by Woolworth's orders, the first ten Penguins sold fast: within six months the company had cleared a million copies. But the character of the firm in its first year was essentially that of bargain-price reprint publisher. The quality of Lane's early copyrights was not consistently high, and by the time of the third batch of ten, in March 1936, it was sinking into the distinctly low-brow and trivial.

A critical change of identity came in May 1937, with the first Pelican, Shaw's *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*. The inspiration came from W. E. Williams (one of many talented publishers at Penguin who were overshadowed by the flamboyant Lane). Williams's principal interest was adult education, and he was later to be one of the architects of the Arts Council. The Pelican non-fiction line supplied a tone both fashionably leftish and intellectually omnivorous. The projected reader was now the would-be well-read man, furnishing his mind and his bookshelves at a modest price. Pelicans aligned Lane with philanthropic publishers like Charles Knight, evangelists for whom books were instruments of popular enlightenment. The extraordinary period of growth the new development heralded continued in 1937 with the first of the Penguin "Specials", *Germany Puts the Clock Back*, by the American foreign correspondent, Edgar Mowrer. The Specials combined the authority of books with the topicality of political journalism. They were, in a word, pamphlets, and their urgency matched the fast-breaking European crisis.

Penguin had a good war. The high print runs of the Specials led to an extremely favourable paper allocation. By the patriarchal standards of his profession, Allen Lane was a young and alarmingly vigorous publisher. But he was somewhat too old, and far too valuable a propagandist, to serve in the armed forces. Ministry control suppressed any potential rivals, while privileging Penguin with many of the functions of a state publisher. Britain's answer to the American government's Armed Services Editions programme was simply to give Penguin its head. In addition to his still-growing general list, Lane devised the Forces Book Club. Its monthly offerings compare favourably with the stuffy, long-format classics which the GI was expected to go to war on.

But where other houses might have held on for the duration, profiteering where the opportunity arose, Penguin used the war to diversify and innovate. In spite of austerity, the sumptuous King Penguins were introduced in 1939. 1940 saw the arrival of Penguin New Writing and 1941 Puffin Story Books. These were the brainchildren of various subordinate talents (Nikolaus Pevsner, John Lehmann, Eleanor Graham). But the clear fact is that Penguin Books defined itself decisively in the seven years when Lane himself was most firmly in charge, while his brothers, together with most of the company's middle management, were away in the forces.

Penguin had its first significant anniversary in 1945, a good year for jubilation. The commemorative booklet *Ten Years of Penguins* (by E. Segrave) stressed that Penguin was no longer a printer of other people's books, but an independent house originating 80 per cent of its titles. It was now probably the country's most prestigious publisher, as much respected as the BBC. And its domain extended far beyond the mere provision of cheap reading

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matter. Penguins were intimately involved with the country's post-war democratic yearnings. According to Attlee, whose nationalizing government came to power in the same month as Penguin's tenth anniversary, "after the Workers' Educational Association, it was Lane and his Penguins which did most to get us into office".

Penguin's status in the immediate post-war period was unequalled by that of any previous publisher. When the ten-volume set of Shaw's plays was issued in July 1946, queues formed outside London branches of Smith's, waiting for the shops to open. A million copies were sold in six weeks. E. V. Rieu's translation of the *Odyssey* was published as the first volume of Penguin Classics in January 1946. Lane expected to lose money on it. In fact, the *Odyssey* went on to sell two-and-a-quarter million copies over the next twenty years and was, until *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the firm's single best seller; (with a "radically revised" cover it will lead an ambitious reissue of the Classics this summer). Not one copy out of ten bought can have been read. And it was bought by the million not because it was Homer, or Homer in clear English, or Homer at 1s 6d, but because it was a Penguin.

By now, Penguin's products were paperbacks which sold like hardbacks. All self-respecting bookshops had a Penguin annexe, effectively a shop within the shop. Things were different in the United States, where Robert de Graff's Pocket Books had been launched in 1939. De Graff aimed specifically at non-bookshop outlets such as news-stands, drug stores and department stores. Pocket Books, and their 25-cent competitors, sold like magazines and were issued monthly in vast over-supply. Unlike hardback books, their shelf life was short, and many if not most were destined to be returns. Their appeal was enhanced by tasteless pictorial covers which were routinely deplored and mocked by the British book trade.

What de Graff invented, though, was the mass-market paperback, as we now know it. In their coming-of-age house history, *The Penguin Story* (1956), Harmondsworth cast a complacently doleful eye at their peers over the Atlantic:

> cut-throat competition continues in the American paperback industry, and will doubtless end with the elimination of the weaker members of the pack and the stabilisation of a handful of big operators making a good thing out of a noisome commodity with which, by comparison, the "horror comic" is as innocuous as a parish magazine.

Secured from any such cut-throat competition by its domination of the British paperback market, Penguin paraded in sober typographical covers and took pride in the smallness of its average print run of 40,000.

Its twenty-fifth anniversary saw Penguin installed as a British institution, dedicated to "the solid responsibility of building up a comprehensive Popular Educator". Fortunately, solid responsibility was not the whole story. It had been Orwell's complaint in 1946 (frustrated as he was in his attempts to find a publisher for *Animal Farm*) that British publishers were collectively "gutless". Fear of showing bad form made them voluntary establishment lackeys. In 1960, Penguin none the less issued *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, daring the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute. It was a crusading gesture which involved some personal risk to Lane. The year before, in the United States, the Chatterley bonanza had revealed the unacceptable face of American publishing. At least half-a-dozen paperbackers plundered the unprotected Lawrence copyright, demonstrating, as one legal commentator put it, "the ethics of the wolf pack". Penguin, by contrast, fought the trial as the vindication of a classic writer by the people's publisher. The trial had its pomposities and hypocrisies. But Penguin came out of it enhanced. Not since Vizetelly had a British publisher stood by an author so courageously. (Allen's mentor John Lane had certainly not imperilled himself for poor Oscar Wilde, in his hour of need.)

The publicity and cash generated by the acquittal of *Lady Chatterley* prepared the way for a massively profitable flotation of Penguin as a public company in 1961. Profits apart, the 1960s were to be a tricky decade for the firm. Lane accepted the change from autocratic to constitutional leadership with bad grace. He disliked the pictorial covers which his clever underling Tony Godwin introduced in the 1960s. He disliked some of the books now carrying the Penguin imprint. In the most famous infantile tantrum in modern publishing history, he mounted a midnight raid on his own warehouse and destroyed a van-load of Siné cartoons that he particularly hated. Irritation with Godwin culminated in an open power struggle in 1967. The insubordinate young publisher was bested and sent on his way with a handshake which was "golden but otherwise very limp". It was to be the last great assertion of tradition over the modern age at Harmondsworth.

As J. E. Morpurgo records in his frank biography *King Penguin* (1979), Lane was tormented by coming to the end of his career with no son to inherit Penguin. Publishers are natural dynasts. As the young Allen Williams, Lane had himself been adopted to enter and eventually take over his "uncle" John Lane's Bodley Head. But Allen Lane could find no successor, or could not bring himself to trust those he found. Various schemes were toyed with and discarded – the most imaginative in 1967. Penguin, Lane determined, should be converted into a university trust. The project came tantalizingly near fruition with the assistance of Richard Hoggart. The idea was that Lane should sell his 700,000 shares to a consortium of academic trustees at two-thirds their value. He would subsequently retain managerial control with Hoggart, presumably, as his good angel. Effectively, Penguin would be owned by a committee of Vice-Chancellors, functioning like the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press. The whole promising venture fell through when the chosen university grandees declined to pledge never to sell the shares Lane bequeathed them. Denied this last perpetual obedience to his will, Lane withdrew.

The academic trust idea reflects the extraordinarily high esteem which British universities enjoyed in the immediate post-Robbins era. Peter Mayer, now Chief Executive, would, I imagine, no more think of handing over today's Penguin Books to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors than he would donate it to Bob Geldof to feed the Ethiopians. Nor would any sane person nowadays think academic trusteeship a workable proposition. But it's nevertheless interesting to speculate on how Penguin would have done under Hoggart's plan. Assuming that it resisted entryism by the kind of radicals who helped scupper Penguin Education, the firm would probably have developed as something midway between the Open University and the Oxford University Press. It's hard to believe that Penguin University Press would have turned in the kind of profits the company made last year; nor that it would take as much pride as it now does in the selling performance of the *The F-Plan Diet*. Had it remained solvent, a university-administered Penguin would presumably have kept puritanically close to the Popular Educator ideal, a role which no British publisher is now concerned with. Hoggart has written eloquently about Penguin's contribution to mid-twentieth-century British culture (most recently in the *Observer* of July 28). But his reflections stop with Lane's death. He has not, as far as I know, given a public opinion on Penguin since 1970. It would be worth having his verdict on the firm as it has developed under commercial curatorship over the last fifteen years.

At the time of his death in 1970, Lane had made no definite arrangements for Penguin's future other than opening negotiations with Longman Pearson. In the face of opposition from the family the deal went through and Penguin was swallowed by the conglomerate six weeks after its founder's funeral. "For me", wrote W. E. Williams, "the Penguin image can never be the same again. The missionaries have gone and the merchandisers have taken over." This fall was bad enough. But even worse was that under the merchandisers Penguin suffered its most severe financial crisis ever. In 1975, the management was forced into a programme of retrenchment in the face of fierce competition and double-digit inflation.

The last ten years have seen a new phase, beginning in 1975, with the acquisition of the American publishing house, Viking. Penguin's advertisements of the period make instructive reading, surrendering as they do all the nationalist complacency of Lane's era. "The creation of Viking-Penguin Inc.", it was announced, "is more than a merger. It is also a portent. It is the way by which quality publishing can flourish in the years to come. Penguin and Viking recognise that the forum for English language publishing is not the United Kingdom or the USA but the English speaking world." Penguin henceforth defined itself as a multi-national, with super-efficiency as its ideal. This new vision was confirmed in 1978, with the appointment of Peter Mayer as Chief Executive. Mayer's publishing background was in America, with Pocket Books and Avon. On coming to office, he made it clear that he was not overawed by British institutions. As his own promotional material puts it: "on his arrival he developed a new and aggressive publishing policy for the company which emphasized a wider range of books and a modern targeted marketing strategy, a risk-oriented stance vis-à-vis acquisitions, and flexible approaches to formats and pricing". The jargon is rather mysterious, but the general meaning is clear enough. Mayer took Penguin by the scruff of the neck and shook it into profitability.

Mayer evidently saw the need to Americanize Penguin. In the United States, post-war paperback publishing had crystallized into two distinct forms: the mass-market paperback (as originated by de Graff) aimed at the millions, and the "quality" or trade paperback (usually credited to Jason Epstein) catering for the discriminating reader. For four decades, Penguin had contrived to fuse the two into its own unique kind of book. But now the danger was that with the emergence of dynamic, clearly defined paperbackers in Britain (Pan and Picador, for instance) Penguin would fall between two stools, lingering on as a genteel anachronism.

Mayer's first act of assertion as Chief Executive was to "create" a bestseller, M. M. Kaye's *The Far Pavilions*. He flouted, apparently deliberately, any number of Penguin traditions. It was W. E. Williams's boast that in its golden years, Penguin's was "a silent revolution sustained by no drum-beating, no pressurised sales campaigns, no competitive gimmicks, not even by market research". *Hype* is the yet uncoined word Williams gropes for. Mayer allocated an unprecedented £40,000 for promotion, and hyped *The Far Pavilions* outrageously. Pre-publication advertisements declared it "a unique event in Penguin publishing, in paperback publishing and quite conceivably in the history of publishing". The book (a goodish romance of love in India) was packaged as "*A Gone with the Wind* of the North West Frontier". Alien gimmicks (giveaway chapters and tube station posters) were enlisted to excite the British reading public. *The Far Pavilions* was produced eccentrically in "B" format (too large for the pocket) and was embellished with a cover in the "bosoms and bottoms" style that Lane detested. It was, in point of fact, no more unique in the history of publishing than the *Sun*'s page three is in the history of journalism. But it was a unique enough event at Harmondsworth.

The point that Mayer was making was that from now on Penguin must ditch its old publishing ways if they got in the way of selling books. Historically, what he has done is to lead (or drag) Penguin into a third major phase of its existence. It all began fifty years ago with Lane's simple commercial initiative, the sixpenny reprint. There followed institutionalization, a complex process involving all sorts of social responsibilities and utopian expectations. Peter Mayer has now de-institutionalized Penguin, freeing it to be nothing more than a supremely good paperback publisher. This does not mean he has vandalized the firm (much), or imported wholesale from America the "noisome commodity" that makes a horror comic look like a parish magazine. But he has unfettered Penguin from its binding past practices and heritage. As far as one can make out, Penguin's policy is now above all pragmatic, or "flexible", to use Mayer's preferred term. In 1985, a Penguin may be a glitzy mass-market paperback, an expensive quality paperback, or a special-interest trade paperback. It may even be an old-fashioned Penguin, if that is what the market calls for. Quick reflexes would seem to be the virtue most prized at Harmondsworth nowadays; the kind of fast work, for example, which led to five of the Booker candidates being paperbacked within a week of announcement in 1980.

It is not mere sentimentality to lament the cultural decline of Penguin. That there has been a falling-off is undeniable. Who can imagine Neil Kinnock prime minister in 1987, declaring "my victory has been brought about by the Open University and Peter Mayer's books"? But, to be honest, Penguin Books has probably changed rather less than the Labour Party over the last forty years. On Allen Lane's death, Richard Hoggart described Penguin's basic assumption up to 1970 as "you can make contact with others by trying to speak straight to them". Honest communication would, it was thought, help build decent communities. Penguin is no longer involved in that kind of enterprise. But it still provides more good books at lower cost than any other publisher. And that is certainly something to celebrate.

Predicting the future of the book trade is notoriously tricky. But it is certain that Penguin, revived by Mayer, will be central to any changes. They are now without question the most important single publisher in the country. Change would seem to be long overdue. The selling of books in Britain is currently in the same state as international air travel was in the 1970s. The market is controlled by an artificially high price for the product. Deregulation of the book industry (of which the threatened imposition of VAT is a first tremor and the abolition of the NBA will be the second) can not indefinitely be held off.

In this context, the most recent moves by Penguin are portentous. In May this year, they acquired, among other properties, the major hardback publishing houses of Hamish Hamilton and Michael Joseph. It may be that, flushed with recent success, Penguin has ambitions to be a 1970s style conglomerate, but if this expansion heralds the breakdown of the traditional division between hardback and paperback, Penguin's major service to the reading public could be still to come.

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Terence Hawkes

LINDA HUTCHEON
A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms
143pp. Methuen. £12.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0416370802

At its best, parody ranks as a peculiarly penetrative kind of criticism. Yet in an age intensely aware of the complexities surrounding that activity, the precise nature of parody becomes notoriously difficult to determine. A devaluation of the author's intention and an advancement of the reader's role in the generation of meaning, a recognition of the mediating power of historical and ideological forces, a heightened sense of all art's capacity for self-reflection and intertextual reference; these stand among the firmest conclusions of recent literary theory. And they all conspire to undermine the commonsense notion of parody as the result of a specific commitment whereby one text sets out directly to ridicule another.

On the contrary, literary theory implies a non-specific and indirect ubiquity: a parodic potential lurking within and offering promiscuously to link all manner of texts, almost at the whim of the cruising reader who finds cause to invoke it. We can add, as context, the evident decline of a Romantic aesthetic whose high estimation of originality and individual genius guaranteed parody a low, parasitic status. With that relegation rescinded, parody's promotion has proved rapid and inexorable.

Certainly the twentieth-century sensibility seems ineluctably drawn towards it. We seem almost to live in an age of parody: one whose only common style consists in a knowing deployment of the styles of its predecessors, or even in its sensitivity to the notion of style itself. In such a setting, parodic reference between texts becomes the very stuff of which texts are made, a mode in which mastery rests between James Joyce and the incomparable Pierre Menard: author, no less, of *Don Quixote* and first apostle of consenting, adult homotextuality.

Linda Hutcheon's thoughtful engagement with the theory of parody picks its way meticulously through this conceptual minefield, to emerge with a convincing map of the terrain which admirably complements her previous account of the nature of artistic self-reflection, *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980). As one of the major forms of textual self-consciousness, parody presents her with an obvious quarry. And she proves an assiduous hunter, since her argument's scope is necessarily broad, focusing on film and television as well as literary texts until at its furthest reach it finds in post-modern architecture the sort of doubly-coded dialogue with the past that suggests a satisfactory theoretical model.

In the process, the concept of parody inevitably expands to match the commitment of contemporary art to a self-cannibalizing practice which the Russian formalists termed "refunctioning". The simple ironic mockery disdained by Romanticism finds itself stretched to include a notion of massive cultural recycling. Parody, at least at the level of this analysis, becomes "an integrated structural modelling process of revising, replaying, inverting and 'trans-contextualizing' previous works of art."

If this links parody with some of the central features of modern creativity, it also describes a process which might be said to be distinctively American. It hints at the "replaying", revisionary essence, for instance, both of jazz music and of a particular kind of post-structuralist literary criticism. That Geoffrey Hartman has already suggested (in his *Criticism in the Wilderness*) a conceptual common ground shared by these activities prompts the observation that in her expanded notion of parody, Professor Hutcheon has perhaps adumbrated fundamental aspects of the American artistic mode itself.

To style this "parodic" involves no denigration. On the contrary, it stands as witness to parody's considerable generative power. As a result, other kinds of relationship between texts, such as those involved in burlesque, travesty, pastiche, plagiarism, quotation and allusion can be usefully distinguished from those at stake in parody's case. As a way of reinforcing the point, Hutcheon insists that the prefix *para* should inherit its full range of reference. Parody can thus certainly set one text ironically *against* another, but it is also capable of setting a text to work *beside* another, of establishing a complicity or even accord with it in which the ironic relationship becomes more subtly productive.

Parody's capacity for this sort of collusion with its "target" texts naturally serves to root it firmly in the specific social and historical contexts in which that sort of co-operation proves feasible. Thus it can claim to be "one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context-dependent nature of meaning". As a result, a sensitivity to the details of the whole act of enunciation, involving both the production of the text and its reception, is not only essential to the operation of parody, but something which parody actively fosters. In this way, Hutcheon concludes, an understanding of parody makes for a heightened awareness of the ideological context in which all art occurs and to which it both contributes and responds. Thus a firm grasp of the nature of parody can help to "de-marginalize" literature by enabling critics, as Edward Said puts it, "to read and write with a sense of the greater stake in historical and political effectiveness that literary as well as other texts have had".

The fact that these words from Said's *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983) appear in the final chapter of *A Theory of Parody* entitled "The World, the Parodic Text, and the Theorist" offers an appropriate instance of the sort of complicit ironic involvement of one text with another for whose fruitfulness the book has convincingly argued. And it provides a fitting conclusion to a scrupulously reasoned case made more persuasive by the tenacity with which its details have been pursued.

Familiar litanies

Richard Brown

RICARDO J. QUINONES
Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and development
303pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £30.90.
0691066361
MARY ANN CAWS
Reading Frames in Modern Fiction
312pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £32.70.
0691066256

Ricardo Quinones's helpful survey of general features of Modernist literature opens by attempting to make the intentions of his work explicit, though these intentions are individual and compendious enough to make this attempt far from easy. He hopes to chart what he calls (in a familiar metaphor) the "familiar litany" of Modernist works in relation to a context of Nietzschean intellectual crisis; to seek out survivals of, and make contrasts with, aspects of Renaissance and Romantic modes of literary consciousness; to elaborate "indicator-themes" of "time" and "development"; and to propose a three-phase history of Modernism, comprising an early "negative" phase up to the First World War, a second period of "fruitful" concern with multiplicity of consciousness, and a third phase in the 1930s exemplified in the "personal mythic consciousness" of *Four Quartets* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Wide-ranging as are these themes, they form little more than a platform on which Quinones builds an edifice consisting of all but a few of those central concerns that have enabled critics and teachers to point illuminating contrasts between the works of these major figures over the last half-century. He has lots to say about history: lucidly summarizing Nietzsche's *Uses and Abuses of History* and pointing up the senses in which Modernist revolts against continuity and succession bring to a close ideas that had held sway since the Renaissance. The discussion of history leads him on to talk of time, and thence to an explanation of the clock as a perennial symbol of the machine and of mechanical and industrial consciousness against which organicist Romanticism, but also discontinuous Modernism, can be shown to have striven. That Marx, Bergson and Lukács are distant cousins in their theories of time and that important Modernist writers like Lawrence differed in their attitudes to the machine, even the Futurist enthusiasts with whom they are often compared, are among the insights on offer here.

Quinones is remarkable for the justice of his generalizations but also for the freshness and sincerity of some of his remarks. He asks big questions about Modernists and Fascism and about their legacy to the 1960s. "One of the most consistent and astonishing phenomena," he pauses disingenuously to ask, "is the way generations of students respond to *The Waste Land* . . . . Why should these students whose untutored preferences are still romantic, democratic and filled with secular optimism, be so fascinated by a poem whose author, not long after its publication, would make known his classical, royalist and Anglo-Catholic allegiances?" To be sure these provocative questions are those of a university professor rather than of a cultural iconoclast, and it may be objected that his apparent openness sometimes seems to mask the absence of still bigger and more provocative questions. Not least among Quinones's blind spots is the failure in this approach, while discussing the exhaustion of "Europe" and all that it represented at the turn of the century, to attach to the question of "America". While he has much that is valuable and well considered on Lawrence, Joyce, Woolf, Hulme, Thomas Mann and Proust, it is disappointing to find that such a serviceable map has no places marked on it for Henry James.

Mary Ann Caws in *Reading Frames in Modern Fiction* ably represents another kind of academic criticism of the moment. Like Quinones she purports to offer a definition of Modernism – though, compared to his, her attempt seems arbitrary and lacking in historical validity or depth. Yet this poverty of history is to be expected and maybe excused, since her allegiances are strictly those of the new Formalism and arbitrariness is a quality she embraces with all her considerable intellectual might. Criticism, she asserts is an "obsession" and she parades the obsessiveness of her own interest in narrative frames, borderings, openings and closures, inter-genre relationships, figurings, posturings, privileged or repeated moments, "insettings" and perspectives with an odd, modish and self-deprecating glee. One section of her argument (that which deals with Melville's *Pierre*) is a deliberately excessive self-parody of her method of reading canonical texts through successive mirrors and apertures which she discerns. Settings are crucial for her. She meditates (the term is her own) on moments in fiction when characters stand at doors or windows as if that in itself is more important than what they say or see or do when they are there.

If Quinones is a Cavalier, Caws is a decided Roundhead, purging her argument of affective indulgences or even the "indulgences" of traditional philosophical and critical ideas. Where Quinones discusses Joyce and Lawrence and looks to Europe in the person of Mann, Caws is immersed in James, has no mention of Joyce or Lawrence and thinks of Europe as an intertextual merger of Poe and Baudelaire. Presumably the irony is deliberate whereby James's "The Figure in the Carpet" – a parable of critical wrongheadedness – is centrally treated by Caws and by new American formalists to whom she claims affiliation.

Her choice of the term *aperture* to kick off the notion of framing suggests a critical approach sensitive to the needs of a post-literate age. Surely it is in discussions of the cinema that a critical obsession with angle, framing and perspective could be of most use and the "inter-genre" references which she repeatedly observes might be especially interesting in a medium that is comparatively new. Untiringly clever as Caws can be in her frolic through literary texts, one trembles at the iconoclasm of her unsupported (and unsupportable) assertion that these frames "are what literature is, for a large part, about".

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MACMILLAN EDUCATION

Heights of indignation

Owen Dudley Edwards

MALCOLM MOOS (Editor)
A Carnival of Buncombe: Writings on politics by H. L. Mencken
370pp. University of Chicago Press. £9.30.
0 226 51977 5
EDWARD A. MARTIN
H. L. Mencken and the Debunkers
251pp. Athens: University of Georgia Press. $22.50.
0 8203 0702 5

The appearance of these two volumes should, in contrast to Mencken's view of his discovery that he was forced to vote for Warren Harding, "lift the blood pressure and fill the liver with hosannahs". Malcolm Moos's edition of Mencken's writings on Presidential politics from 1920 to 1936 is indispensable to any reader of American history, politics and journalism in its period and should be read by anyone starting in political journalism in general. Edward A. Martin has written a remarkably perceptive volume, full of fine insights on Mencken and revelations of his services to culture, together with wise remarks on Sinclair Lewis, Don Marquis, Ring Lardner, Nathanael West and the *New Yorker*.

The Moos volume appeared first in 1956, the year of Mencken's death, and subsequently was a Vintage paperback. Professor Moos edited, annotated, selected and introduced quietly, sensibly, amusingly and perceptively. But the University of Chicago Press has chosen to force up the price of this reprint to what, in view of the invaluable nature of the text, are downright anti-social lengths by including nineteen pages from Joseph Epstein which have little to do with the business in hand, while *the notes, which could have done with a little elaboration, are unchanged.* Even original misprints have survived, such as "Pinkey" for "Pinkney", and for good measure a few more have been thrown in.

Moos presents a fairly traditional view of Mencken as "the irreverent Mr Mencken", a title he borrowed from a characteristic biography of the day, and Martin dives deep within Mencken's early writings to exhibit aspects of "Progressivism" on women, Blacks, capital punishment, and even William Jennings Bryan; but Dr Epstein has little to tell us. I gather that he considers he is sounder on Mencken than Edmund Wilson was. Wilson will survive it. Of Wilson it could be said what Mencken said of LaFollette: "He is tremendous when he is right, and he is even more tremendous when he is wrong." Epstein is simply wearisome in either category. His pursuit of the obvious and frequent acquisition of the inaccurate lead him to certain conclusions which are positively contradicted by the evidence of the ensuing text. For example: "What made Mencken special as a political writer . . . was an almost utter absence of moral indignation. (The qualifier 'almost' is needed because of Mencken's one lapse in this regard, his intense dislike for FDR.)" Now, if there is one thing which lifts these pieces from the level of mere brilliant analysis, poetical movement of language, effects that are incalculably funny yet instructive, superb encapsulations of the self-destructions of political chicanery, it is that suddenly there thunders a rage that reminds one of Swift. Take for instance the passage in which he declares for LaFollette on the eve of the Presidential election of 1924:

> There remains, then, the Wisconsin Red, with his pockets stuffed with Soviet gold. I shall vote for him unhesitatingly, and for a plain reason: he is the best man in the running, *as a man*. There is no ring in his nose. Nobody owns him. Nobody bosses him. Nobody even advises him. Right or wrong, he has stood on his own bottom, firmly and resolutely, since the day he was first heard of in politics, battling for his ideas in good weather and bad, facing great odds gladly, going against his followers as well as with his followers, taking his own line always and sticking to it with superb courage and resolution.
>
> Suppose all Americans were like LaFollette? What a country it would be! No more depressing goose-stepping. No more gorillas in hysterical herds. No more trimming and trembling.

And on for six more grand paragraphs, lashing a single contemptuous blow at the charge of Communist domination of LaFollette, but for most of the time a celebration of courage.

For the most part Mencken wrote on questions about which he had reasons for great personal indignation, notably the treatment of German-Americans during the First World War, and yet managed to turn his anger into the most elegant satire. He can only be understood if he is examined as a German-American, one seething with rage at the insults and injuries of the country of his birth to the culture and people of his origin. But we hardly appreciate the bitterness, so light is the tone of the mockery. It does not prevent his blows from finding their target, but he was very judicious in keeping himself apart from the customary embittered ethnic-minority whining.

Dorothea Lange's "Filipinos working in lettuce fields; Salinas, California", 1935. The picture is taken from In this Proud Land: America 1935–1943 as seen in the FSA photographs *by Roy Emerson Stryker and Nancy Wood (192pp. Secker and Warburg. 0 436 50040 X).*

Dr Martin's theses are indispensable for a proper understanding of the political writings of 1920–36. As he sees it, Mencken had himself entered into the optimistic muckraking of Progressive journalism. Hence we confront in these political writings not a cynic but an idealist blazing with indignation at the destruction of his idealism, though it was an idealism which could be fired again. Martin even sees in Mencken's savage obituary of Bryan a pity for what a former idol had become, with a hint of the Mencken who had mourned for Bryan's defeat in the Democratic convention of 1904. Mencken in the 1920s was ready enough to scoff at all that had been in Progressivism, and yet he was far from deaf to the old promptings of his youth. It is unfortunate that Martin, who makes his case so ably and persuasively, should have ignored the Moos anthology, and also Professor James Crooks's important volume on Baltimore progressivism. As it is he shows that Mencken is too readily taken at the self-valuation he forced on his much wider public after the First World War. Betrayed in his idealism, he would not comfort the traitors by showing how deep was the betrayal. Only the merest flicker of that is allowed out, as in his column of October 5, 1931 when he said of Wilson: "If his campaign in 1916 was honest and honorable, then honesty and honor are words quite without meaning."

This was, of course, because Wilson was re-nominated and made the star of a campaign on a peace platform, and war followed within a month of his second inaugural. Martin notes that Mencken had admired Wilson in his time (and probably voted for him in the 1916 election). And once the war was on he was forced into a great political silence. He emerged from it a being brutalized out of his idealism, but far less grateful for the awakening then he liked to pretend.

I suspect Martin could go a great deal farther, and find in Mencken not only a great reforming impulse in his own twenties and thirties, but also an early acceptance of political leadership which he never quite lost. Martin does much service in exhuming the debunkers and showing Mencken's place in the spirit of the time, but some very curious figures became heroes in the debunking age. While seeing Chester Arthur as a spoilsman, Mencken seemed to glorify him into a kind of schoolboy hero rather than making him the recipient of barbs of the kind he flung against pilferers from the public trough in his Progressive years or his iconoclastic ones. This was the preservation of the little boy in the Baltimore Democratic household to whom Arthur's Presidency (actually much more reformist than he conceded) had something of the charms of Robin Hood.

Much of Mencken's politics was dictated by the search for another idol of that kind. Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson were not really frauds for Mencken: they were much more lost leaders. Nor was his estimate of any of them so badly off balance. He appreciated the strengths of Rosevelt much better than most of his contemporaries did, including Roosevelt's own biographer Pringle, whose superficial debunkery lasted as an influential source for a quarter-century. The quality meant, too, that if Mencken was quick to see the sham behind the political blather, he had always an eye out for potential greatness. The combination gave him rather short-term loyalty, and it meant that his disillusion with Bryan, Roosevelt and Wilson would be re-enacted with subsequent figures.

Dr Martin does his work so well that it seems impertinent to paraphrase his arguments. He puts Mencken firmly into his literary world, and conveys the extent of his influence on certain writers at least to the point of showing the presence of a common mood. Inevitably there must be some shortcomings. His Lardner, for example, is the Lardner of witty journalism, which is like presenting an appreciation of Shakespeare without the tragedies. Mencken, a failed poet and fiction writer, has little in common with the Lardner of the masterful short stories, perhaps the finest in the American literature of their time. Martin's pursuit of Don Marquis in the context of Mencken may be a little tendentious, but he comes close to proving his point and in any case writes so well about Marquis and assesses the meaning of archy and mehitabel (whom he regrettably capitalizes) so ably that this section transcends any other obligation. It is true that the essay grows out of an earlier article of his own, but like Mencken, and unlike Epstein, Martin's old work can stand retailoring to a new context.

In brief, both of these works can be hailed as excellent contributions to their subject (for Mencken was certainly part of his own subject) and to an understanding of the culture of Mencken's times.

Virtues of dissent

Anne Chisholm

KAY BOYLE
Words That Must Somehow Be Said: Selected essays 1927–1984
262pp. Chatto and Windus / The Hogarth Press. £10.95.
0 7011 2967 0

The American novelist and reporter Kay Boyle, now in her eighties, has long held an exalted view of the writer's role in society. Since the 1920s she has produced over twenty books of fiction (including *The White Horses of Vienna*, *The Avalanche*, and *Plagued By The Nightingale*, the latter republished by Virago in 1981) and together with Robert MacAlmon, a well-known book of memoirs, *Being Geniuses Together*, while simultaneously writing literary and social criticism, teaching and generally stirring up the American conscience. "It is always the writers", she announces in one of the pieces reprinted in this first collection of her non-fiction writings, "who must bear the full weight of moral responsibility . . . we considered ourselves a portion of the contemporary conscience, and we had no pity on the compromiser or the poor in spirit of our time". Not for her what Orwell called the moral effort of objectivity.

Born in Minnesota in 1902, Kay Boyle married a Frenchman and moved to France in the early 1920s. Before long she was on her own in Paris and making friends with the American expatriate writers and publishers Robert MacAlmon, Harry and Caresse Crosby and William Bird. In 1941, after considerable personal and political vicissitudes, she returned to America; after the war she came under suspicion during the McCarthy period, but by 1963 had found a base as a lecturer at San Francisco State University. She has been committed for decades now to campaigning for racial justice and against war.

This collection of her writings is both annoying and, in the end, impressive. The introduction, by the editor, Elizabeth Bell, is short on facts and too free with tributes. It is exaggerated to claim that Kay Boyle has been "in the forefront of this century's major cultural and political movements" and irritating to be assured that she had "an unswerving dedication to reflecting in her work life as she perceived it" (as opposed, no doubt, to how she did not). The selection and ordering of the pieces is confusing; the three main sections, "On Writers and Writing", "On the Body Politic" and "On The Human Condition", contain overlapping and repetitious material. It is hard to see, for example, why a piece on the plight of women in Iran, written in 1976, should be followed by one on Vietnam written in 1967. Some items are thin and hardly worth including, such as a review (written in 1942) of four of Elizabeth Bowen's novels and *Bowen's Court* in which she reproves the writer for "restraint" and "unreality", or a sentimental glimpse of Dylan Thomas in a Fitzrovia pub, tenuously linking him to the cause of intellectual freedom in America in the 1950s. Both Boyle's sentiments and her prose can seem overheated.

Sometimes, however, the good causes coincide with good writing and the effect is exhilarating. Boyle's account of a spell in prison in 1968 (she was arrested during a protest against the Vietnam war) is excellent, as is an earlier report on the trial of a war criminal in a provincial town in Germany. Best of all is an ironic, simple and moving description of the arrival of refrigerated coffins from Saigon at Travis Air Force base near San Francisco. "We feel we owe it to the boy's family that he goes home looking just as good as he did when he went away – and sometimes even better," she was told by an embalming assistant.

Boyle, whose fiction is largely autobiographical, has perhaps always been more naturally gifted as a reporter than as a novelist. She will probably soon be established as a heroine by younger radicals and feminists. She deserves celebration, for her indomitable spirit and for the tradition she upholds; the radical intellectual streak in American culture, now unfashionable, which holds that dissent, on grounds of conscience is not anti-American but essentially American.

From slime to time

Roy Porter

PAOLO ROSSI
The Dark Abyss of Time: The history of the Earth and the history of nations from Hooke to Vico
Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane
338pp. The University of Chicago Press. £36.75.
0 226 72835 8

"Time we may comprehend", pronounced Sir Thomas Browne, "'Tis but five days older than ourselves." Whatever the personal reasons for Browne's playing with paradox, historians of time would agree that his boast offers good evidence of a fundamental perceptual shift separating the early modern mind from our own. In other words, "before the Scientific Revolution" time was no enigma, because there was so little of it, so few years to get confused by. God had created the world fully-fashioned; Creation had occurred in 4004 BC, and in their universal chronologies annalists accounted for the ages and stages thenceforth from the Creation up to the present.

Since then we have been through a time revolution. The "Creationist" universe collapsed, the Great Chain of Being was temporalized. Aeons of geological time were discovered (he could find "no vestiges of a beginning", proclaimed James Hutton, whose bicentenary we celebrate this year). Archaeology and anthropology were soon tracing man back into a new dimension called prehistory, and the Darwinian *Descent* plotted him back to more primitive primates, and eventually, metaphorically at least, to the primordial slime.

Historians of science such as Francis Haber and John Greene have made this story familiar. The "discovery of time" is therein presented as yet one more triumph of the Scientific Revolution; following hard on the heels of that mix of telescopic observation and imaginative metaphysics which was the discovery of infinite space. Yet, argues Paolo Rossi, this standard account is erroneous. The importance of his book – first published in Italian in 1979 – is that it offers a radically distinct, heterodox reading of the intellectual history of time.

For time isn't a modern discovery or formulation at all. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, scholars knew full well about temporality, the slow evolution of language, religion and so forth, even about deserts of vast eternity. How could they not? They knew their Aristotelian and Epicurean texts, not to mention pagan fables, like the backs of their hands; just as they had to confront the claims of the Egyptians, the Chinese, and slightly later the Hindus, for the vast antiquity of their empires. In the republic of letters, meantime, free-thinkers such as Lapeyrère were linking Scripture and logic to tout the idea of pre-Adamite man; Spinoza was advancing the eternity of Nature, and even well-meaning defenders of orthodoxy such as Isaac Vossius, aspiring to square reason and the Bible, were taking out overdrafts on the bank of time.

Thus what characterizes seventeenth and eighteenth-century natural and civil history (insists Rossi) was not the supposed discovery of time by science (the breakthrough "from natural history to the history of nature") but anguished skirmishing over perennial dilemmas about the past. Was language a divine gift or had it evolved? What were the origins of paganism and barbarism? Did Egyptian civilization antedate the Israelite? Were "fossils" proof that God had let some parts of His creation go extinct? On all these battlegrounds, rival notions of time, priority, ancestry and development became the weapons of war. Time was thus not a discovery; it was a tactical resource in the politics of history-making.

Defending, or rather defining, Christian orthodoxy assumed great priority in all such controversies. The "dark abyss of time" (the phrase was Buffon's) was terrifying indeed, and theologians were generally keen to keep time on a short rein. Yet this response was no bigoted reflex, but one backed by scientific scepticism, scholarly rigour, and an astute philosophical critique of the credulous conceit of those who conjured time out of thin air. And who was the greatest deflator of those who were so profligate with time? None other than the arch-sceptic, Voltaire.

And in the same camp there also falls – surprisingly, at first sight, but herein lies Rossi's acuteness – none other than Vico. Even today the *Scienza Nuova* continues to be conscripted on the secular side in the battles Italian academics still wage as if the Risorgimento were in full swing, press-ganged into a teleology leading from the "lonely precursor" Vico through Herder and Hegel up to Croce. But contextualize Vico, read him alongside such *prima facie* unlikely bedfellows as Marsham and Spencer, Stillingfleet and Thomas Burnet, Huet and William Warburton, and he comes out on the side of a temperate Christianity, denying extravagant drafts of time. Moreover, set firmly in context, even Vico's stunning visions of man the myth-maker are not so original after all – they chime with the polemics of many of the seventeenth-century polymaths; and, properly contextualized, they appear as strategies to undercut pagan pretensions to annex antiquity as the foundation-stone of authority.

So Rossi's sensitive historicism further punctures whig myths about the march of positive intellectual progress. The entrenched notion that modern views of time emerge from science liberating itself from Scripture prove a gross caricature. If we reduce debates over fossils or the origins of language to jousts between radicals and reactionaries, crudely speaking friends and foes of a long time-scale, we miss the subtleties of Vico's and his contemporaries' attempts to construct a politics of time appropriate to their wider projects. Rossi by contrast is alert to such anachronism, just as he delivers a timely warning against proleptically separating the history of natural science from the history of human culture. On the early-modern knowledge chart, they were one, they were synchronized.

A brief review can do little more than encourage readers to sample for themselves the pleasures of Rossi's researches into the fine texture of early-modern scholarly debate. That the book has weaknesses too will be readily apparent. Densely compacted summaries of obscure cosmologies don't always make for very lively reading. It is a pity that he has ignored the insights on historicity provided by Stucturalists and their successors; nor indeed is he always consistent (whiggism intrudes into his discussions of more recent science).

And a word of caution is necessary about the book's production. Some strange slips bedevilled the original Italian edition – eg, the author of *Religion and the Decline of Magic* came out as one T. Keith; and far from having been exorcized from the English translation they have multiplied, so that for instance, the bibliography attributes Herder's *magnum opus* to John Harris. Numerous other slips may mislead the unwary. Thus Darwin is stated as arguing that the erosion of "the cliffs at Weald" [*sic*] took 300 years; rather he believed that the denudation of the Weald needed 300 million years!

The translation can be quite unnervingly shaky, especially on technical terms. What should be uniformitarian geology comes out as "uniformism", and the internalist school of the history of science appears here as "internism" – why was the translator's unconscious so possessed by military metaphors? These problems aside, however, Professor Rossi has once more given us the subtle, pregnant and challenging analysis we have come to expect from him.

Observation, Experiment, and Hypothesis in Modern Physical Science, edited by Peter Achinstein and Owen Hannaway, has recently been published (379pp. MIT. £39.25. 0 262 01083 6). It is a collection of original contributions by philosophers and historians of science to the discussion of such topics as the hypothetico-deductive method of inquiry, the "concept of observation and the validity of the theoretical–observation distinction, the probabilistic basis of confirmation, and the testing of idealizations and approximations". The papers include "Modestly Radical Empiricism" by Lawrence Sklar; "Observation and the Scientific Enterprise" by Dudley Shapere; and "Observations, Explanatory Power, and Simplicity: Toward a Non-Humean Account" by Richard N. Boyd and R. C. Jeffrey.

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Not so special specialists

Archie Brown

BRUCE PARROTT
Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union
428pp. MIT Press. £40.50 (paperback, £10.95).
0 262 16092 7
PETER KNEEN
Soviet Scientists and the State: An examination of the social and political aspects of science in the USSR.
138pp. Macmillan. £25.
0 333 37058 9

No Soviet politician has laid greater stress on the paramount necessity for the Soviet economy to move faster in the transition from "extensive to intensive development" than the country's new leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. In an important speech in December, 1984, he observed that "only an intensive economy, developing on the most up-to-date scientific and technical basis" can promote popular well-being and the strengthening of the Soviet Union in the international arena and enable the country "to enter the new millennium, fittingly, as a great and prosperous power".

Though the phrase "scientific and technological revolution" has been in such frequent use in the Soviet Union over the past decade and a half that it is normally referred to, and instantly recognized, simply by its initials, there is a concern, evidently shared by Gorbachev, that for all that talk the Soviet Union is not actually in the forefront of such a revolution. If things are allowed to drift, Gorbachev seems to be saying, the Soviet Union may not be a superpower by the year 2000. Since Gorbachev made that speech, he has been given greater power than he had before (and more than any other individual within the country) to do something about the Soviet economy. Those who assume that he will fail may be guilty of wishful thinking. Already there are signs that he has both the determination and the vision to undertake more far-reaching reform than was congenial to at least two of his three immediate predecessors. (Andropov made a start, but his failing health and short time at the top combined to determine that it would be no more than a start.)

Yet the problems which Gorbachev and his colleagues in the Politburo face in harnessing more fully the scientific and technological revolution to the needs of the Soviet economy are formidable. The books reviewed here – on the politics of technology and on the politics of science in the Soviet Union – are invaluable guides to many of the issues confronting them.

Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union is the more substantial and more broadly based volume of the two. In this work (the paperback edition of which has just been published) Bruce Parrott provides superb analyses of the successive Soviet strategies for stimulating indigenous innovation, of the policy changes and policy arguments on the issue of strengthening economic ties with the West, and of the links between bureaucratic struggle over policy on technology and Kremlin politics.

The foundations of the present economic system were laid in Stalin's time, and Parrott devotes just over a third of his book to developments between 1928 and 1953. But his most original contribution comes in his discussion of the Khrushchev and, especially, the Brezhnev years. He brings out perceptively the different positions adopted by various Soviet political leaders and members of élite groups, and notes how an overriding concern to do nothing which might undermine the political system led to a concentration on a narrow range of reforms and the eschewing of concessions to the market or to research and development competition.

The jockeying for power and influence over Soviet economic policy between Brezhnev and Kosygin, with Brezhnev gradually increasing his power at the expense of the more reform-minded Kosygin, was not conducive to change of the kind the Soviet economy needed. If the top leader himself was not convinced of the need for reform, it was all too easy for the various bureaucratic agencies with a vested interest in the status quo to dilute still further even such half-measures as were introduced. As Parrott concludes:

> Despite the spreading anxiety about the economy's performance, the leaders were unable to achieve any substantial change in the operating style of the massive bureaucratic apparatus over which they presided. . . . Only a strong leader willing to attack the bureaucracy head-on, and probably committed to dismantling a major portion of it, could produce such a change of administrative conduct. In the Brezhnev years, no leader was willing or able to adopt such a course of action.

Whether Gorbachev will grasp the nettle remains to be seen. But taken in conjunction with the hints to be found in some of his speeches, not all Soviet bureaucrats (if they had access to the British press) would be reassured by a remark he made during his visit to Britain last year. Taking up a reference by the chairman of ICI to "Parkinson's Law", Gorbachev responded: "If you're referring to C. Northcote Parkinson, I've got news for you. He lives in Moscow now."

One factor which will have a bearing on the success or failure of economic reform in the Soviet Union is the extent to which those with specialist knowledge – whether social scientists, natural scientists or technologists – are allowed to exercise real influence on policy outcomes. Already over the past few years social scientists have been able to criticize increasingly openly the shortcomings of the Soviet economy and to publish what are, in some instances, radical proposals for change. In the natural sciences, freedom to publish has been much greater over a longer period – essentially since the fall of Khrushchev, for the latter (his anti-Stalinism notwithstanding) was quite capable of interfering detrimentally to curtail scientific debate, most notably with his support of the charlatan, Lysenko.

The relationship between Soviet natural scientists and technologists on the one hand, and the party and state on the other, is the theme of the latest volume in the series which Macmillan publish in association with the Birmingham University Centre for Russian and East European Studies. Peter Kneen's *Soviet Scientists and the State*, though much more restricted in its ambitions and coverage than *Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union*, complements Parrott's book admirably. It is a careful and scholarly study of Soviet scientists as an important social group, of academic élites within this group and of the interlinkage between the academic and political élites. It examines both the political role of and party pressures upon the scientists, the way scientists are organized within the Academy of Sciences and the incidence of party membership among them.

Considerable differences exist between the various branches of knowledge in terms of the proportion of their practitioners who are Communist Party members. In general, the "purer" the science the lower the incidence of party membership. The more related to politics and ideology the academic subject, the harder it will be to make progress within that discipline without being a member of the party. Thus, Kneen points out that at the top of the Soviet academic hierarchy – the full and corresponding members of the USSR Academy of Sciences (who have the unique privilege in the Soviet context of themselves choosing the new members of their ranks by secret ballot in a competitive annual election following months of behind-the-scenes lobbying) – there is 100 per cent membership in the fields of philosophy, law and economics, 67 per cent among chemists, 52 per cent among biologists and 46 per cent among physicists and mathematicians.

One of the problems faced by Soviet scientists and technologists which has implications for Soviet economic development in an era of rapid technological change is the more limited extent, as compared with Western scholars, to which they benefit from informal communication among international networks of scientists. As Kneen notes:

> Academic exchanges between the Soviet Union and Western countries involve only a tiny fraction of their respective scientific communities, whilst a significant proportion of Soviet scientists regularly fails to appear at the international conferences and seminars where their attendance has been anticipated.

As a result of their incomplete participation in the international scientific community, Soviet scientists are more dependent than their Western counterparts on the appearance of published papers in foreign journals, the gist of whose findings may often be known in advance to Western scholars through informal networks. A Soviet-published book cited by Kneen estimated (perhaps conservatively) that this degree of isolation may result in "a lag of at least a year between the work of Soviet scientists and their opposite numbers abroad".

While the Soviet Union has its areas of outstandingly successful scientific endeavour, there seems little doubt (and some of the evidence is marshalled by Kneen) that, taken in the round, it is behind the United States. The Soviet leadership faces a dilemma here which has similarities to that involved in introducing an economic reform which will effectively promote enterprise and initiative and yet not bring about any diminution of political control. It is described by Kneen as "the contradiction in party policy towards science between the desire for effective research on the one hand and for reliable, ideologically committed scientists on the other", given that Soviet research would benefit from greater integration with scientific research in the Western world but that much freer interchange of scientists would increase the chances of outside political as well as scientific influence.

These dilemmas are hardly likely to be wholly resolved within the framework of the existing Soviet political system. To a greater extent than is generally realized in the West, however, the scope of debate within the system on matters of economic and social policy has broadened in the Soviet Union over the past two decades. The Communist Party itself, notwithstanding an impressively monolithic façade, is made up of very different people with different views, interests and priorities. It may be that the influence of well-qualified specialists on the party is not less than that of the party on them. Specialists in research institutes (outside the ranks of the party and state bureaucracy) are increasingly involved in the early stages of policy-making as well as in the subsequent interpretation and implementation of the policy decision or legislation.

There would appear to be scope for the new Soviet leadership to broaden somewhat further the limits of the possible both in the area of economic reform and in the organization and climate of scientific research. Many key supports for the existing system would remain under their control, not least the control over careers. As Andropov began to demonstrate, however, and as Gorbachev is already underlining, there are more efficient ways of exercising this control than that of rewarding longevity rather than ability to innovate, or of honouring a facility with clichés more than fresh thought.

Out of the frying pan

George Schöpflin

STEPHEN D. KERTÉSZ
Between Russia and the West: Hungary and the illusions of peacemaking 1945–1947
299pp. Harper and Row. £18.95.
0 268 01079 X

Hungary's foreign policy in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War was of very limited significance. Stephen D. Kertész, a senior official in the Hungarian foreign ministry at the time, and, later, Professor of Government at the University of Notre Dame, bases his account both on personal memories as a high level participant and on subsequent researches principally in American archives. Although *Between Russia and the West: Hungary and the Illusions of Peacemaking 1945–1947* contains items of considerable interest, there are also some serious underlying flaws.

Kertész's views are based on an implicit assumption concerning the freedom of manoeuvre enjoyed by small states in international affairs. For all practical purposes, he argues, Hungary had none; "the great issues were settled by external not by internal forces". While Hungary's position as Hitler's last satellite was indeed very unfavourable, Kertész is not entirely persuasive in arguing that it was able to accomplish nothing, especially as his own book contains several examples to the contrary.

This tacit assumption leads to the conclusion that, because Hungary's position between the Great Powers was so extraordinarily constrained, her leaders were unable to act and, therefore, that what they did was largely irrelevant. It takes for granted that the extension of Soviet power into Hungary was inevitable and that the creation of a Soviet-type system was the only possible outcome.

Yet this takes no account of the evidence that Soviet intentions towards Hungary were not fixed and final in 1944, that they shifted over time and that Hungarian politicians did have some room for manoeuvre, which they proved incapable of using. This space might not have been enough to establish a properly working Western democracy, but it could have provided for the Finlandization of Hungary by preserving a greater measure of political pluralism than is countenanced by Soviet-type systems.

A further assumption is that certain events speak for themselves and need no further analysis. There is an example of this in the otherwise very useful account that Kertész gives of the conflict between Czechoslovakia and Hungary over the plans of the former to expel its ethnic Hungarian minority. The Hungarian government, backed by public opinion, was outraged and sought to block this. To put pressure on Hungary, the Benes government in Czechoslovakia began to introduce severe discriminatory measures against the ethnic Hungarians, as a way of persuading Hungarian opinion that explusion was the only solution. This policy was begun in 1945 and intensified thereafter. At one point, the Czechoslovak authorities began to deport ethnic Hungarians to the Sudetenland and the Hungarian government ended all negotiations with Prague.

At this juncture, according to Kertész, the Yugoslav government intervened in Prague and the deportations stopped. This information is very little known and sheds crucial light on the latitude enjoyed by Yugoslavia in Danubian affairs at this time, as well as seriously undermining the argument that the Great Powers settled everything anyway. Yet, Kertész offers no explanation for why the Yugoslavs intervened, what leverage they enjoyed over Prague and what the Hungarians offered in return.

Much of the book is taken up with detailing the minutiae of the Paris Peace negotiations of 1946–47. This adds very little to what is already known, except for occasional items illustrating the lack of interest in Hungary outside Hungary itself. None of the Western powers showed much more than sympathy and the Soviet Union had its own plans, which did not include frontier revisions in favour of an ex-enemy state proving to be rather slow in introducing communism. Hungary lost out on all counts. Because Romania and Czechoslovakia offered better opportunities for the creation of communist systems, they were given Soviet support in their determination to hold on to ethnic Hungarian areas in Transylvania and Slovakia respectively. Hungary may have enjoyed a pluralistic system until 1947, but was already regarded by the West as irretrievably in the Soviet camp and, therefore, beyond effective assistance.

Hungarian society and the non-communist political leadership were too fragmented to put up a determined defence of the post-war political system which might have persuaded Stalin not to proceed with Sovietization and to accept some modified variant of the Finnish solution. Kertész, on the other hand, seems to be arguing that there was only one possible outcome of the Soviet Union's policies, the one that actually happened. This is excessively deterministic.

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In time of war

Julia Briggs

ROBERTO INNOCENTI and IAN McEWAN
Rose Blanche
Cape. £5.95.
0 224 02841 3

"When wars begin people often cheer. The sadness comes later. The men from the town went off to fight for Germany. Rose Blanche and her mother joined the crowds and waved them goodbye." So begins Roberto Innocenti's original and disturbing picture book, *Rose Blanche*. (Rose Blanche was the name of a protest group in wartime Germany.) The flat and laconic text by Ian McEwan, from a story by Christophe Gallaz, is deliberately subordinated to the large, powerful and informative illustrations which tell, in precise and highly textured detail, of Germany's aggression and defeat in the Second World War. Roberto Innocenti's pictures are conceived and executed with rare imagination: the cover shows a little girl peering through a window on to which are reflected lorry-loads of wounded and retreating soldiers. Each page uses telling angles and evocative colour: the drab red brick and dull browns of tanks and uniforms, the watery grey-blue of puddled snow give place only on the last page to the clear blues and greens of a spring landscape. Iron posts and barbed wire are wreathed with wild flowers to mark the place where Rose Blanche was accidentally shot by her retreating countrymen. "Behind her were figures moving through the fog. Tired and fearful soldiers saw danger everywhere. As Rose Blanche turned to walk away, there was a shot."

Because so much of the story is presented in pictures, some of its horror is muted. We are not told in so many words that Rose has been shot, only that there was a shot; nor are we told that the silent, hungry children behind coils of barbed wire are Jews in a concentration camp, though their yellow stars will inform the adult reader of this. Everything that the pictures show – the departing soldiers, the fat mayor with a swastika on his arm-band, the starving prisoners in the camp, the evacuation of the town – is seen through the uncomprehending eyes of childhood. The wider meaning of events will need to be explained to the young reader, who may well be more upset at Rose's mother losing her as the townspeople flee than by less familiar miseries and deprivations. How many adults will actually want to provide the necessary explanations is another question. Young children are increasingly exposed to supposedly heroic acts of brutality on films and television. By contrast Innocenti's book is an invitation to compassion – for the luckless child hustled away by the soldiers, for the camp inmates, even, latterly, for the soldiers themselves. But it does have a nightmare quality. A

Roberto Innocenti's book is nowhere more perceptive than in his presentation of his heroine's courage and compassion, which acts as a counterbalance to the theme of man's inhumanity to man in war. Rose Blanche's actions, though not her fate, are full of hope. The book shows a world where individual acts still have a meaning, where moral distinctions can and must be made. It all looks very different from the world of post-war politics, where nuclear rain promises to fall alike on the just and the unjust.

Safe bets

John Mole

JONATHAN GATHORNE-HARDY
Cyril Bonhamy and Operation Ping
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
102pp. Cape. £5.95.
0 224 02287 3
RICHARD ADAMS
The Bureaucats
Illustrated by Robin Jacques
110pp. Viking Kestrel. £5.95.
0 670 80120 8

Back home after yet another adventure, Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's consummate hero-by-default, Cyril Bonhamy, makes his intentions plain. "I'm never going away again *ever*", he announces to his wife Deirdre, who has just made it equally clear that next time she is coming too. It is safe to assume that she will not, and, with the reputation he has gained for serendipitous daring, it is a fair bet that Cyril does.

Cyril Bonhamy is a small, fat, scholarly writer who talks about books on the television but whose own most recent work has only sold fifty-three copies. His publisher is after something completely different, "Masses of blood, Cyril, masses and masses of blood and car chases."

By a combination of quite-by-chance and his reputation as an unlikely but effective man-of-action, Cyril gets involved with an SAS raid on the island monastery of Pung where the maniacal drug-king Abbot Ping Po is holed up with a collection of evil-smelling monks. While the SAS men tear about making a lot of noise, Cyril defeats the villains by a method learnt from studying an ancient parchment photocopied for him by his friend from the British Museum. He emerges as the hero of the hour, collecting £10,000 – all the time under the impression that he was asked along on the raid in order to research a book.

Cyril Bonhamy and Operation Ping gets the best of several genres. As an adventure it is inventive, and it also gently undermines the glamour of violence. The SAS are referred to as "a gang of thumping thugs hurling stun bombs", and there is an effective scene in the army stores where Cyril – as though he were in a novelty joke shop – is shown all the latest lethal hardware. "'How clever', said Cyril politely, thinking he had never seen anything so corny." His chief antagonist is the appalling RSM Rude whose comeuppance is the final, heartening triumph of the meek over the bullying. Above all, this is a funny book, endearingly silly without ever pandering too much to children's short-term love of the facetious. Quentin Blake's illustrations fit the mood perfectly.

Robin Jacques's illustrations for Richard Adams's modest little collection of five stories, *The Bureaucats*, are more carefully worked and they complement the text's rather old-world charm. Richard and Thomas are two spirited kittens who get up to domestic pranks which involve their Master, a man of substance who is aware of his civic dignity, wears spats under his pinstripes and addresses a mischievous feline as "my cat". These attractive tales, originally told to his daughters, are Adams with his claws retracted. They inhabit a nice world of well-heeled kindliness – stray cats and a miserable conjurer's rabbit are rescued and looked after – and in the final story the Master turns down an offer of 50,000 dollars from the world's greatest exhibitor of animal freaks and marvels, who wants to buy the kittens. He can afford to, and so he should.

Verbal and visual

Julia Eccleshare

SHIRLEY HUGHES
Chips and Jessie
64pp. Bodley Head. £5.50.
0 370 30666 X

Shirley Hughes's children have long delighted her audience. Underneath the pleasant appearance of her illustrations she has always shown a remarkable ability to see things from a child's perspective. In *Dogger*, for example, she captures little Dave's grief at being separated from his beloved soft toy. In *Alfie's Feet*, Alfie's delight in his new pair of Wellington boots is precisely recorded. In *Chips and Jessie*, Hughes shows the same insight into the close, comfortable friendship between Chips and Jessie, both at home and at school. In four short stories and a finale we see the two children in easily identifiable situations. Jessie invites Chips to tea but her plan for a special tea-party is interrupted by the arrival of some unwanted guests. Chips offers to look after the class hamster for the holidays but the hamster disappears: has it been swallowed by Chips's cat? The situations may not be original but Hughes brings to them a freshness which makes them fun to read. Chips has been told not to offer to look after the hamster because they already have a cat. When it looks as if the cat has eaten the hamster, Chips and his mother have a lively child-parent conversation. "You ... have brought Chico upstairs when I PARTICULARLY told you not to!" "Now look what's happened!" "I thought I'd shut the door, but Albert must have got in somehow and eaten Chico up! SOB!" There is no sugary sweetness here, despite the rather cosy artwork, and the balloon-encapsulated exchanges achieve a pleasing immediacy.

The main interest of the book is its original presentation. In one book are combined three black-and-white cartoon-strip stories and two stories which mix continuous prose with cartoons; a device intended to make the stories more available and appealing to children. It is an ingenious idea and one which does seem to work once the child has got into the book. The reading levels of the balloon text and the continuous text are well matched and it is easy to see the advantages of the simultaneous approach both for stretching the less confident reader and as an enjoyable adjunct for those who read fluently. Shirley Hughes has a pleasantly easy style and a good ear for dialogue. Verbally, therefore, the twin approach fares well. Visually it is less successful. The illustrations to the main text look good but the cartoon strip is cramped, which means that it does not have equal weight with the prose.

IRINA HALE
The Lost Toys
Deutsch. £4.50.
0 233 97772 4

The Lost Toys is an unusual and charming book. Like Irina Hale's two previous picture books, *Donkey's Dreadful Day* and *Brown Bear in a Brown Chair*, it deals with stuffed toys with wayward personalities and like those books it has a strong story – in this case an apparently simple tale of abandonment and safe return. Having been left behind on the station platform – "'I thought *you* had them', cried Jasper" – Pink Ted, Flossie the knitted rabbit and frog have to fend for themselves. After a series of adventures they notice a newspaper advertisement offering a reward for them and are able to post themselves home to the address given. All the toys have character and show resourcefulness and courage.

There is a pleasingly fantastic atmosphere to the tale. The toys' adventures, which take place against highly coloured collaged backgrounds, are free-wheeling and dreamlike with rapid changes of scene; houses are built and abandoned, snow falls, ice forms, Robber Cats roar past on motorbikes. As in dreams the surrealism is held in check by the prompt appearance of the next solution, recounted here in a simple narrative style ("They walked down to the river. The ice was already melting. 'How do we get across?' wondered Flossie. 'On a raft', said Neddy"). Irina Hale's bright, rather freely painted illustrations provide the right amount of detail. They allow the toys and their surroundings the barest amount of expression, conveying excitement and reassurance as needed, finally doing justice to the welcome-home cake which is so big that it has to be eaten in the bath.

Elizabeth Barry

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Prison Paintings by Michael Quanne, of which a short notice appeared on page 967 of the *TLS*, September 6, is published by John Murray (and not by Michael Joseph).